

Catch Word #15 – Get under Someone's Skin

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone, this is Harp...

Maura: And Maura...

Harp: At Culips, with the **Catch Word** podcast.

Maura: And if you'd like to see the script for this episode, go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Yes! And we're going to look at one idiom and then we're going to look at some synonyms (which is a big word).

Harp: It is a big word. Basically, it means other idioms or other words that mean the same thing.

Maura: Right, the first one that we have is **"to get under someone's skin."**

Harp: Yeah, it's a weird one if you think about the actual visual image.

Maura: Yeah, it doesn't really make sense.

Harp: **"Getting under someone's skin."** But, right. So, now can you explain this?

Maura: Sure, **"to get under someone's skin."** If someone **gets under your skin**, it means that they are bothering you. Something that they're doing is bothering you: you don't like some behaviour, something that they did.

Harp: Yeah, it doesn't mean you don't like them as a person, but it's usually something specific that they do, maybe they talk about how they're too rich all the time or something about them.

Maura: Well, what is something that **gets under your skin**?

Harp: When people think that they know everything. That really **gets under my skin**. If you're a **doctor** in something and you know everything there is to know, then fine, OK, you're smarter than me. I get it. But most of us know a little bit about everything, but those people that always have to be right, they always have to finish the conversation and they always **have the last word**. Those people always **get under my skin**. What about you? That was a little bit of a **rant**, I'm sorry.

- Maura: No, but if it **gets under your skin**, obviously you want to **rant** about it. So, to **rant** about it is to talk for a little bit of time and describe why it bothers you and what's bothering you about it and all that stuff.
- Harp: Yeah, when you're upset about something you **rant** about something.
- Maura: What's something that **gets under my skin**?
- Harp: When people are late, maybe? Sometimes?
- Maura: Yeah, sometimes. Yeah, that's true, if people are late it can **get under my skin**, if you're waiting for them or if you have somewhere to go or if you made an effort to be there on time and then they are late, it can bother me or **get under my skin**.
- Harp: Sometimes people get bothered by other people's physical actions, like maybe they scratch at themselves and it really **gets under people's skin**. I don't know, to me I'm really oblivious, but, so it doesn't bother me, but sometimes...
- Maura: So, another example, if I were to, say, tell you Harp about my new neighbour and how he is playing music loudly all the time and it's really annoying me, could you give me some advice?
- Harp: Don't let him **get under your skin**. That's what I would say.
- Maura: OK, right! So you are telling me...
- Harp: Relax, don't let the little things bother you, don't let his actions **get under your skin**, don't let them bother you.
- Maura: Right. So, we looked at "**getting under someone's skin**," but then we have another idiom that's very similar. Which one is that, Harp?
- Harp: I love this one. I say this one all the time: "This **drives me crazy**" or "**drives me mad**."
- Maura: Yeah, or "**to drive someone insane**."
- Harp: It is basically the same, you use it in the same way, but sometimes it can be really serious. Like this person does something constantly that really **drives me crazy** and almost angry about it. Or it can be something of a minor irritation.

- Maura: Sometimes it is just used casually; it's not a **big deal**. But it can also be not just a person, too, but like a sound. A sound could **drive you crazy**. Like, if someone is, like, tapping a pen. I don't know if you can hear this, but sometimes people continually tap things and that can **drive people crazy**.
- Harp: Yeah, like people's **nervous tics**. You know, when they tap their leg; lots of people have that nervous habit.
- Maura: Yeah, so with "**driving someone crazy**," it could be another person **driving you crazy** or it could be a thing that **drives you crazy**, too. And there was one more which is one that I like.
- Harp: Yes, yes!
- Maura: It is kind of funny, which is "**to rub someone the wrong way**."
- Harp: Yeah!
- Maura: So, I could say there is this new guy who I work with and he just started last week, I don't know him very well, but something about him **rubs me the wrong way**.
- Harp: So, this one is more general. I would say not so specific. Sometimes you don't know what it is about the specific action or the person that irritates you, but it is just more of a general...
- Maura: Yeah, and it is not just something that the person did, you just don't really like the person. Maybe you can't say why or maybe you can, but, in general, you don't like them, and it's not because they are mean or bad people, just something about them you don't like.
- Harp: Yeah, for example, yesterday I was taking the bus with my boyfriend and there was this guy on the bus and he was talking really loud, but that's OK, it's a bus, I don't care, but something about him, his demeanour, his attitude, it just **rubbed me the wrong way**. But the funny part of this story is that sometimes people change this expression and make a joke out of it because when I was walking home I said to my boyfriend and to my friends, "that guy really **rubbed me the wrong way**," and my boyfriend saw a poster of this beautiful woman and he said in a joking way, "that woman **rubs me the right way**," which is a very common response to that expression.
- Maura: And it's an interesting way to look at where the expression might have come from. Like, "to rub" is like, I'll try to explain it, like two hands kind of going

back and forth, or you can rub lotion on your hands, so that kind of movement is “**rubbing**.” So, if you **rub someone the right way**, obviously they like it, and it’s a good thing. So, if you **rub someone the wrong way** you don’t like it.

Harp: Yeah, it’s like an uncomfortable sensation, or...

Maura: Which is how you might feel about that person: uncomfortable to be around them.

Harp: OK, all right, I think we explained that quite thoroughly for everyone, but make sure you can always check out our Lipservice for more Detailed Explanations and you can quiz yourself.

Maura: And give us feedback, too, because we always want to hear from you or maybe there is something you don’t understand, you could ask us and we could talk about it again. And you can send any comments or questions to questions@culips.com.

Harp: That is C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Maura: So, this was Maura...

Harp: And Harp...

Maura: With the Catch Word podcast at Culips.

Harp: See you, everyone!

Maura: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

To get under someone's skin

"To get under someone's skin" is to annoy or bother someone.

Some idioms we look at are fixed expressions – their structure never changes. In this case, this idiom is not a fixed expression – its structure can change. Here are some examples using **"to get under someone's skin"** in different ways. It can be the person who **gets under your skin** or it can be the action.

It really **gets under my skin** when he talks so much.

She **gets under your skin** when she acts like that, doesn't she?

I don't mean to **get under anyone's skin**, but I have to mention the problem we have been having.

You have really been **getting under my skin** lately.

Don't let them **get under your skin**. Just ignore them.

"I've Got You Under My Skin"

Most famously sung by Frank Sinatra, ***I've Got You Under My Skin***, is a song written by Cole Porter in 1956. This song does not follow the idiom we outlined in this episode. I wanted to mention it because it looks very similar.

Here are the lyrics from the chorus of the song:

***I've got you under my skin
I've got you deep in the heart of me
So deep in my heart, that you're really a part of me
I've got you under my skin***

"To have someone under your skin" is to really love them. That is quite different from the idiom **"to get under someone's skin."**

So, you are probably asking: *How do I know the difference?* One big difference is the context. You can tell from other details if the person loves someone or really doesn't like someone.



The simplest explanation is that the “love” meaning of “**have got you under my skin**” is not that common. It was made popular by the song and it is also mentioned in movies sometimes, but I have rarely heard it used in real conversations.

There is also usually a small difference between “have got” and “to get.” “**I have got you under my skin**” means that you are **under my skin**, you are close to me. If you get **under my skin** this means you are irritating me.

Here are a couple of examples with context:

Jane: Last night we went out and he was being so sweet.

Allison: I think you are falling in love.

Jane: He has really gotten **under my skin**.

Samantha: He always eats with his mouth open and talks so loudly. It is so annoying.

Bill: He really gets **under your skin**, doesn't he?

It is easy to see that the first example is about love and the second example is about being annoyed.

Doctor

When Harp says “**doctor**” she is not talking about a medical **doctor** that you go to see when you are sick. We can also use “**doctor**” to talk about people who have completed a **doctorate** in their area of study.

In North American universities, your first degree is called a bachelor's degree (3 to 4 years). Then if you would like to continue, the next step is a master's degree (1 to 2 years). If you continue after this, the next degree is called a **doctorate** (usually 4 years).

Professors at universities all have **doctorates** and they are **doctors** in their subject.

Know-it-alls

Harp says that people who act like they know everything **get under her skin**. There is a slang term for these kinds of people. They can be called “**know-it-alls**.” They are called “**know-it-alls**” because they act like they *know it all*.

To have the last word

Harp also says she doesn't like **know-it-alls** because they often need to **have the last word**. “**To have the last word**” means that you say the very last thing at the end of an argument. If someone says the last thing at the end of an argument, it can often mean

they won the argument. If you say the last thing and no one challenges you, what you say is correct. So, if you **have the last word** it can mean the other people in the discussion believe what you said.

Some people, who want to be right all the time, must **have the last word**. They will not let another person say the last thing during a discussion; they feel they must end the dialogue. People who must **have the last word** really annoy Harp. They **get under Harp's skin**.

A rant

"A rant" is when a person complains about something for some time (at least a couple of minutes) and is very passionate about the subject they are complaining about. Harp had **a rant** (or, as a verb, **"ranting"**) about **what gets under her skin**.

In Montreal, we have four free weekly entertainment newspapers. One of them is called *The Mirror*. In this newspaper, there is a section called *The **Rant Line***. It is a phone line that anyone can call and **rant** about anything that is bothering or annoying them in Montreal. Every week there is a page in this newspaper that contains transcripts of different **rants** from people who have called.

Another example is from a Canadian television show called *The Rick Mercer Report*. It is a comedy show based on news and politics. In the show, hosted by Rick Mercer, he often **rants**. He usually chooses a political topic and talks non-stop about something annoying that is currently in the news. This is called his **rant**.

To drive someone crazy / mad / insane

"To drive someone" in this expression means, "to force someone." So, someone is being forced to go **crazy** because of another person's actions. The behaviour of another person makes one person feel **insane**.

"Crazy," "mad," and **"insane"** all mean the same thing. They are all synonyms.

If you are thinking that **"mad"** means "angry," you are right. **"Mad"** has other meanings, like **"crazy."** In this case, **"crazy," "mad"** and **"insane"** describe someone who has lost control of their mind.

A big deal

"A big deal" is something that is very important. It may not be important to everyone.

Here is an example:

I know you may not care about the results, but it is **a big deal** to me.

In this episode, I also say, “It’s not a **big deal**.” We often use this expression in the negative form to say something is not important. I was saying that some things that annoy people are really not that important, they are little things.

We can also use this expression to make someone feel better about something they think is important.

Here is an example:

Don’t worry about it. It is not important. It’s not a **big deal**.

Nervous tics

Nervous tics are usually small actions, like moving your leg quickly and repeatedly or continually blinking (opening and closing the part that covers your eye). These small actions are done repetitively and without thinking. The person could do this when they are **nervous**. The actions of a **nervous tic** do not usually last very long. Not everyone has a **nervous tic**.

In this episode, we gave the example of “**tapping**” as a **nervous tic**. “**To tap**” is to hit something repeatedly with your finger or foot. You could also use a pen. We gave this example in this episode.

To rub someone the wrong way

This is another expression, just like “**to get under someone’s skin**” and “**to drive someone crazy**.” If someone **rubs you the wrong way**, you don’t like them. It is different from the first two expressions because it is usually not based on a simple action. You do not really like the person, you may not even know exactly why, but the person **rubs you the wrong way**.

We explained “**rub**” in this episode, but I will do it again here briefly. “**To rub**” is when two things touch each other and move in opposite directions. One thing can also not move while the other moves back and forth.

A good example is a foot rub or foot massage. One person rubs another person’s foot by moving their hands around the foot.

And if you **rub someone the wrong way**, they don’t like it. So, when you use this expression, it means that you don’t like something about the other person.

To rub someone the *right* way

This is a joke that Harp mentioned this episode. People sometimes respond to the expression “**to rub someone the wrong way**” with a sarcastic, funny joke about rubbing someone the right way.

If you rub someone the right way, it is pleasurable, and so sometimes people turn the expression around. In this case, Harp’s boyfriend made a joke about a beautiful woman **rubbing him the right way**. It is a kind of sexual joke.

Quiz (see the answers at the bottom of this Lipservice)

1. Which expression means, “It really bothers me when he complains all the time”?

- a) It really gets my skin when he complains all the time.
- b) It really gets under my skin when he complains all the time.
- c) It really gets him under my skin when he complains all the time.
- d) It really gets under me when he complains all the time.

2. “I hate cleaning up after my room-mates. They are so messy. Every day when I come home the apartment is so messy and dirty. I have to spend an hour straightening up the place. They wear their shoes around the apartment and get dirt everywhere. I almost always do their dishes and they often leave laundry in the washing machine for days! I can’t take it anymore. I might have to move out.”

What is this an example of?

- a) a runt
- b) someone’s skin
- c) a rant

3. Gus: Has Louis made a decision yet?

Joanne: No, he hasn’t! You know, I usually love the guy, but when he can’t make a decision, he _____ me crazy.

Fill in the blank.

- a) dove
- b) dives
- c) drives
- d) taps

4. What is another example of something that could get under someone’s skin?

- a) another person’s nervous tics
- b) having a conversation
- c) giving someone a rub
- d) looking at a poster

5. What is the other expression with a similar meaning to “to get under someone’s skin” or “to drive someone crazy”?

- a) to rub someone the right way
- b) to rub someone the wrong way
- c) to rob someone in the wrong way
- d) to rib someone the right way

Answers: 1.b 2.c 3.c 4.a 5.b