

Catch Word #27 – Cut to the Chase

Transcript

Robin: Hey everyone, this is Robin.

Maura: And Maura.

Robin: And we're back with our famous **Catch Word** podcast at Culips.

Maura: Yeah, our website is C-U-L-I-P-S.com, so you can go to our website for the transcript and any explanations for this episode or any other Culips episode.

Robin: Absolutely! And today what's our phrase? What are we going to be looking at?

Maura: Yes, the Catch Word phrase is **“to cut to the chase.”**

Robin: **“To cut to the chase.”**

Maura: **“To cut to the chase.”**

Robin: **“To cut to the chase.”**

Maura: We use the expression **“to cut to the chase”** when we want someone to get to the point. We want them to forget the details and tell us the real point of what they're saying. We use this expression when someone is speaking not clearly, not focusing on the real point.

Robin: Absolutely. You use it when you want them to tell you the important stuff. So, for example, “Hey Maura, you know I borrowed your car yesterday.”

Maura: Oh yeah, yeah.

Robin: Yeah and I **took it for a spin around the block** and I went up north and I came back.

Maura: OK.

Robin: It's a really good car, but **along the way** I started noticing some problems.

Maura: OK. **Cut to the chase**, Robin. What are you trying to say?

- Robin: Well, I broke your car!
- Maura: Exactly. OK, so the important information was that something bad happened to my car and Robin, you know, you weren't really telling me the important information.
- Robin: I tried to keep it away from you or **beat around the bush**.
- Maura: Right. You weren't being very clear so I had to tell you to get to the point.
- Robin: To get to the point, absolutely.
- Maura: Can we think of another example with "**cut to the chase**"?
- Robin: Absolutely! Here we go:
- So, how are the sales figures looking for this year's business?
- Maura: Well, you know, I looked at them but nothing is final yet, I'm not ...
- Robin: You are progressing, aren't you?
- Maura: Yes, things are happening. And ...
- Robin: And they will buy? Listen, listen, just **cut to the chase**, will they buy or not?
- Maura: No, they won't.
- Robin: OK, there we go, there was a perfect example of a meeting in which Maura was very shy about the fact that she wasn't able to make some sales. So, in that example I had to make her **cut to the chase**.
- Maura: Right, you had to make me say the important details.
- Robin: Absolutely.
- Maura: Yeah, and do you know where this expression came from?
- Robin: **I have no clue, no idea.**
- Maura: It actually started a long time ago in the 1920s.
- Robin: In the 1920s?

- Maura: Yeah. Of course we had movies in the 1920s and very often there was an exciting part in the movie (like the **climax**) and often that was a car chase. Yeah, so this came from the movies when you didn't want to see the boring **build up** (dramatic parts). You wanted to get to the very exciting, important part of the movie, which was the chase. So you could say "**cut to the chase**" or cut to the important, interesting part.
- Robin: Get to the important, interesting stuff—the fun stuff of the film.
- Maura: Exactly, yeah. So what is another expression that we use like "**to cut to the chase**"?
- Robin: Well, I am also familiar with "**stop beating around the bush.**" "**Stop beating around the bush.**"
- Maura: Exactly! So this really means give me the details, get to the point, just like **cut to the chase**. "**To stop beating around the bush.**" So let's give them an example. Robin?
- Robin: What's up?
- Maura: I wanted to ask you something.
- Robin: OK.
- Maura: You're not busy this weekend, right?
- Robin: No.
- Maura: And, Saturday morning, you're free?
- Robin: Listen, listen Maura **stop beating around the bush**, what's up?
- Maura: Well, I needed to ask you to help me clean my car.
- Robin: OK. So that's another example. "**Stop beating around the bush.**"
- Maura: Right. I didn't want to ask Robin to help me. I wasn't sure. So I was asking a lot of other questions and getting other details that weren't as important.
- Robin: So you tried to indirectly ask me a question.
- Maura: Exactly. And that's really the meaning of "**to beat around the bush.**" The positive sense of the word means that you are not getting to the point, you're

going around the topic, and you're not being specific. So when you say to someone **"to stop beating around the bush,"** you're saying tell me directly, just like **"to cut to the chase."** Here's one last example.

Robin: Hey Maura, how are you doing?

Maura: Yeah, I'm good, how are you?

Robin: So check this out, right. You know the \$500 that I borrowed from you three weeks ago?

Maura: Yes, I definitely remember \$500 that you borrowed.

Robin: OK, so check this out, I told you I would be paid in two weeks and I got my **paycheque** and, you know, everything's cool, but...

Maura: OK Robin, **stop beating around the bush, what is going on?**

Robin: Well, I got paid and I'm ready, I'm prepared to give you some of the money, I'm going to pay you. I'm going to pay you.

Maura: Robin, **cut to the chase**, what is it?

Robin: I don't have all your money this week, I only have \$50. Can I pay you the rest later?

Maura: All right. So, there's one last example using **"beating around the bush"** or **"to stop beating around the bush"** and also **"to cut to the chase."**

Robin: **"To cut to the chase,"** absolutely. So I think that is about it.

Maura: Yeah, **that does it** for this episode.

Robin: We hope you enjoyed and if you do have any questions, send us an email at questions@culips.com.

Maura: And that's it for today's episode, yeah and don't forget to go to our website, C-U-L-I-P-S.com. This has been Maura ...

Robin: And your man, Robin ...

Maura: And we'll talk to you next time. Bye.

Robin: See you.

Detailed Explanation

To cut to the chase

Another way of saying “**to cut to the chase**” could be “Would you please stop talking about all this stuff that is unimportant and get to the exciting part of the story?”

“**To cut to the chase**” is usually used when someone is telling a long story or not being clear about what they want to say. The listener interrupts and asks the person to get to the main point of what they are saying. The speaker is intentionally avoiding the point of the story, simply to create suspense or because they do not want to say something.

“**Cut to the chase**” can be used when the listener is excited about the story, like in the next example:

- Jane: My sister went into the hospital on Tuesday.
Deirdre: Oh really?
Jane: Yes, and she had to wait one hour before she even saw a doctor. Then she and her partner finally saw a doctor. Then they waited all night long, watching the contractions.
Deirdre: And then?
Jane: Then in the morning, my sister got hungry so ...
Deirdre: **Cut to the chase.** Did she have a baby boy or girl?

This expression is also used when the speaker does not want to reveal something negative.

- Peter: Did I get accepted to university?
Karen: I picked up the envelope and saw that it was small.
Peter: So?
Karen: And then I also noticed that it wasn't very thick. But you said I could open it, so I did. Then ...
Peter: Just **cut to the chase.**
Karen: Sorry. You didn't get into school.

It could be a bit rude to use this expression if someone is speaking slowly because they naturally speak slowly or if they are giving important details to the story. It is generally not acceptable to use this expression with people who are not close friends or family.

(Stop) beating around the bush

When this expression is used with “stop” its meaning is exactly the same as “**cut to the chase.**”

“**Beating around the bush**” means to speak indirectly or to not say what you mean. It can also be used with “stop,” like “**Stop beating around the bush** and say what you mean.”

Let's imagine that the “bush” is the point of what the speaker is saying. If you go around the bush, then you are not getting to the point. If you **stop beating around the bush**, you are getting to the point.

Here are a couple examples:

Harry: Did you find out what happened to Robert this weekend?

Kelly: I finally did. He kept **beating around the bush**, but in the end he told me.

Greg: ... And then I went for a walk. Then I heard a loud noise and got scared, so I went outside to check.

Carmen: You are really **beating around the bush**. Just tell me what happened.

To take it for a spin around the block

This is a sentence that Robin uses in one of our examples. He says he “**took it for a spin around the block**.” This is really two expressions in one!

“**To take it for a spin**” means to try some kind of vehicle (car, van, bike, etc.) for a short drive. So in the way Robin uses it, he says that he drove the car for a short time. Here are some other examples:



Vicky: Let's **take** my new car **for a spin**.

Samuel: I was only **taking it for a spin**. I never thought I would have been in an accident.

“A **block**” or “the **block**” can be used to mean from one intersection to the next. A **block** is generally the length of a street between two intersections. We can give directions by saying, for example, “Go two blocks and then take a left.”

In this case, Robin says “**around the block**” and this means “around the neighbourhood.”

So, “Robin took the car for a short drive around the neighbourhood,” has the same meaning as “Robin **took the car for a spin around the block**.”

Along the way

This expression means “during the trip” or “as we were travelling.” “**Along the way**” is used when we are describing some travel and then another action happens.

Robin says, “**Along the way** I started noticing some problems.” You always see the expression with another action. Here are a couple more examples:

Penelope: **Along the way** we saw so many birds, deer, and other wildlife.

Jonas: We were having a great time, but **along the way** we heard some strange noises.

I have no idea/I have no clue

These expressions mean exactly the same thing. “**I have no idea**” and “**I have no clue**” are both ways to say “I really do not know.” It means “I completely do not know at all.” It is an exaggerated way to say “I do not know.”

Jim: How high can an airplane fly?

Shannon: **I have no idea.**

Pam: Do you know why Melissa was so upset?

Cathy: **I have no clue** why she was upset.

Iris: **I have no clue** how to speak Chinese.

Build up

The **build up** is the part of the story when a variety of actions happen leading up to the most important part or the most intense part of the story. For example, the story begins and with each action the suspense or expectations are **built up** (this is also a verb).

Music can also **build up**. It is soft and slow and then becomes more and more intense, and this is the **build up**. Then the music goes faster and finally at one moment it reaches the **climax**.

Climax

This is the part of the story when the really exciting thing happens (like the car chase). The **climax** is the most intense part of the story, and this happens after the **build up**. After the **climax**, the story then begins to fall back down and lose the tension.

A common story in a romantic comedy starts when a man and a woman meet. Various things happen to them, including some problems (**build up**). Eventually one tells the other that they are in love (**a climax**) and then the story continues with the couple being happy.

Paycheque

Canada has some spellings that are different from those used in the United States. The pronunciation is the same. The American spelling of this word is “**paycheck**,” but in Canada and the United Kingdom we spell it “**paycheque**.”

This is the money that is given to you by the place where you work when you get paid, most often in the form of a **cheque**.



What is going on?

This is a natural expression for “What is happening?” When we say “**What is going on?**” we want to know what action is happening at this moment. We must use this expression with the word “on” at the end.

That does it

The expression “**that does it**” means that something is finished. At the end of this episode, Maura says, “**that does it** for this episode.” This means that this episode is finished.

Here are some more examples:

Heather: I am so tired. We have been studying all night.
 Jamie: Yes, you are right. Let’s just finish this last page.

(5 minutes later)

Jamie: And **that does it**. Let’s go home now. We’re done!

Chris (5 years old): Mom, Joe is being mean to me.
 Joe (7 years old): Mom, Chris is not being nice to me.
 Chris: No! It is Joe that is being so mean. He stole my toy.
 Mom: **That does it**. You are both going to your rooms.

And **that does it** for this Detailed Explanation!

Quiz (see the answers at the end of this Lipservice)**1. What is the possible origin of “to cut to the chase”?**

- a) to cut out the chase scene
- b) to start chasing the rabbit
- c) to skip over the boring part of the movie and go to the car chase
- d) to stop chasing the other person

2. When do we use the expression “to cut to the chase”?

- a) when the speaker is talking too fast
- b) when the speaker is not getting to the main point of what they want to say
- c) when the speaker is not sure what they are saying
- d) when the speaker is only talking about the main points, and forgetting the details

3. Which expression means the same as “to cut to the chase”?

- a) to stop beating around the bush
- b) to beat around the bush
- c) to beat the bush
- d) to stop the beating

4. Bonnie: How fast can a cheetah run?

Ron: I am not sure. Actually, _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) I have some ideas
- b) I have no idea
- c) there is no idea
- d) ideas are fun

5. If we want to know what is happening right now, we can ask: _____

Please fill in the blank.

- a) What is going up?
- b) What is going in?
- c) What is going?
- d) What is going on?

6. What is the American spelling for “paycheque”?

- a) paycheck
- b) paycheq
- c) paycheek
- d) paycheque

7. What is the expression that means something is finished?

- a) this is that
- b) do that
- c) that does it
- d) that is doing it

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