

Catchword #42 – Handy

Transcript

- Robin: Hello, everyone, this is Robin...
- Jessie: And this is Jessie. Thanks for listening to Culips.
- Robin: This is our famous Catchword podcast where we take one word and we break it down.
- Jessie: Right! We tell you what it means, give you some examples and we talk about some other words or expressions that mean the same thing.
- Robin: Absolutely! And if you want more information, check out our website. In the Lipservice we have the Detailed Explanation and transcript. So, what's the special word for today?
- Jessie: Well, today's Catchword is **handy**.
- Robin: **Handy**.
- Jessie: So, that comes from the word **hand**.
- Robin: OK. And can you explain a little bit what this means, this word **handy**?
- Jessie: Sure! Well, **handy** is an adjective and it generally means *useful* or *convenient*.
- Robin: OK, *useful* or *convenient*. Can you give me an example of a situation where we would use the word **handy**?
- Jessie: Hmm, let's see. Well, for example, having a **Kleenex** or a **tissue** in my pocket is **handy** because if I **sneeze**, or if my **nose is runny**, I can easily pull out the Kleenex. So it's very convenient, it's very **handy**.
- Robin: It's very useful. And we often use this word to describe people, don't we?
- Jessie: Yeah, when we describe a person it's a little bit different. If we say that a person is **handy** that means that they're good with their hands. They're good at doing things with their hands, like fixing things or building things.

- Robin: OK. So, for example, if someone can build a house or can fix things, repair things around the house, they can be a very **handy** person.
- Jessie: Right. For example, if somebody knows how to fix a toilet if it stops working, you would say they're a very **handy** person.
- Robin: OK, so they're **handy** because we need to use the toilet and if they can fix it so it's working again, they're very useful.
- Jessie: Right. Usually when we fix things around the house, **little jobs** like that, you're using your hands to do it. So, in my mind, that kind of makes sense why you're calling the person **handy**.
- Robin: So somebody who's very good with their hands and who's very useful, we can actually call them a **handyman**. Now, this is someone that goes around and fixes things.
- Jessie: Right, so they're actually fixing things as a job, you're paying them to do it. So, maybe if you want to hang a picture, but you don't have the right tools, you could call a **handyman** and he would come with a hammer and a nail and hang your picture for you.
- Robin: OK.
- Jessie: And you know what? I think we could have a **handywoman** too, but you don't hear about it as much. You know, when I first moved into my apartment the **doorbell** didn't work so we had to call our **landlord**, he gave us the number for the **handyman** and he came and fixed our **doorbell** for us.
- Robin: OK, there is another expression related to this: **to give someone a hand**.
- Jessie: Yeah, **to give someone a hand** means to help somebody. You know, Robin, I'm moving next week.
- Robin: Oh, really? You know I can **give you a hand** if you need me to help you.
- Jessie: Oh, that would be great!
- Robin: OK, so there we used the expression **to give someone a hand**. So, I offered to help you, **to give you a hand**.
- Jessie: Right! And it doesn't have to be **literally** using your hands to help somebody.

- Robin: So, for example, if I write something and I need somebody to check it over, I might ask them to **give me a hand**. I might say, “Hey, Jess, can you **give me a hand**, can you read this thing over?”
- Jessie: Right, **to give someone a hand** is really just a synonym for *to help someone*.
- Robin: Absolutely! It’s a synonym for *helping someone* or *to help someone*.
- Jessie: So, let’s review the catchwords we talked about today.
- Robin: The first one was **handy**, which generally means *to be useful* or *convenient*.
- Jessie: Right! And then we talked about a person being **handy**, which means that they’re good at doing **small jobs** around the house, that they’re really good with their hands.
- Robin: Indeed! And a **handyman** is someone who’s good at fixing things. It could be your **landlord** who fixes the light in your house when it’s broken.
- Jessie: Right. A **handyman** is someone you pay to do **small jobs** around the house.
- Robin: Indeed. And the last expression was **to give somebody a hand** or simply *to help someone*: **to give someone a hand**, *to help somebody*.
- Jessie: Right. Now, be careful because **to give someone a hand** can actually have two meanings and if you want to know more about the other meaning just go to our Lipservice.
- Robin: I think that about does it for today’s podcast. Thank you so much for joining us.
- Jessie: It was great talking to you.
- Robin: For now, this has been Robin...
- Jessie: And Jessie...
- Robin: And we’re signing off.
- Jessie: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

Handy (a thing)

When something is handy it means that it is useful or convenient. In this episode, we give you tons of examples about some things that we consider handy. Here are a few more.

- A cell phone is handy when you need to call someone and you are not at home.
- If you go camping, it can be handy to have a lighter or matches. This way it is much easier to start a campfire.
- Speaking another language is handy when you are travelling. If the people where you are travelling speaking another language, it is handy to speak the same language.

In this case, all of these things are useful and convenient. Here are a couple more examples with *handy* used to talk about the convenience of the location of the item.

- My cell phone is attached to my belt so it is always handy or easy to retrieve.
- When making a campfire, it is always a good idea to keep matches handy because you never know when the fire might go out.

Jessie gives the idea of a tissue or Kleenex being handy. (Kleenex is a popular brand name of tissues, but we often use *Kleenex* in place of *tissue*). The Kleenex is useful and convenient to have if you need to blow your nose, but it is also convenient to have it in your pocket because you can take it out easily and quickly.

A runny nose/sneezing

Jessie gives the example of having a Kleenex handy when you sneeze or have a runny nose.

A person sneezes when they suddenly have a strange feeling in their nose and then air rushes through the nose or mouth, or both. This action is involuntary. People sneeze when they are sick or allergic to something. Smelling black pepper can also make a person sneeze. Sometimes after you sneeze you need a Kleenex.



A runny nose means that your nose is dripping. If you have a runny nose it is often because of a cold, but it could also be because of allergies. It can be used as an adjective. But we can also say that a nose is running. And when your nose is running it is definitely handy to have a tissue nearby.

Handy (a person)

Remember using *handy* for a thing or a person is a bit different. When we use *handy* to talk about a person it means that the person knows how to build things or fix things. This person can fix or build things that many people might need help with.

When we build or fix things, we often use our hands. This is the connection with *handy*, because these people have many skills where they use their hands.

We also give you many examples of things that handy people do, but here are a few more. Handy people sometimes can repair a bike, build a fence, or do many different home renovations.

To be good with your hands

This expression is used a few times in this episode. It really means the same as handy. When someone is good with their hands it means that the person knows how to use their hands in a skilled way. We also say good at doing things with their hands and it means the same thing.

Handyman

A handyman is someone who is handy and uses their skills to earn money. *Handyman* is really the name of a job. A handyman doesn't usually have a regular work schedule or go to the same place every day. A handyman gets calls from different people who need him and travels to different places to fix different problems.

Apartment buildings might have a permanent handyman. A synonym for *handyman* is *maintenance man*. And like we say in this episode, we can also say *handywoman*, but this is less common.

Little jobs / small jobs

A few times in this episode, Jessie uses the expression *small jobs* or *little jobs*. We can use *small jobs* to talk about the work that handymen do. They are called small jobs because the work is usually not long.

For example, the handyman arrives at your house to fix the toilet and he knows what to do. So, it takes the handyman only 15 minutes to fix the toilet. It is a small job because it does not take a long time when the person knows what he or she is doing.

Landlord

If you live in a rented space, you have a landlord. This is a really old word but we still use it today in North America. It is made up of two words, *land* and *lord*. In the past, the landlord was the lord or owner of the land you lived on. Now it is simply the person who owns the apartment or house you live in. We can also say *owner*, too.

Landlord can generally be used for men and women, but for women it is also possible to say *landlady*.

Doorbell

Just like landlord, doorbell is made up of two words, *door* and *bell*. A doorbell is a small button beside the door to a house on the outside. When someone pushes the button, it makes a sound inside the home and the person then knows that there is someone at their door.

There are also lots of places where people do not have doorbells. It is just as common to knock on someone's door as it is to ring someone's doorbell.



Literally

When we say something is done *literally*, it means that something actually or really happened. When we say *literally*, it is like saying that what we say is completely accurate and every word is true. Sometimes we need to use *literally* to emphasize that something actually happened, and that we are not exaggerating.

For example, someone could say, "I got so excited. I was jumping up and down." A person might say they were jumping up and down just to emphasize that they were very excited. But if someone says "I was literally jumping up and down," then we know for certain that the person was really physically jumping up and down.

Here are a couple examples.

Paula: How did you feel when you heard the news?

Carl: I literally started crying as soon as I heard.

Jack: The other day I was walking downtown, and I tripped on something and literally fell right on my face.

Jessie says "It doesn't have to mean literally using your hands." She means that you do not have to actually use your hands. You can help someone by doing other things without using your hands.

Note that many native English speakers do not use *literally* properly. Some people use it to exaggerate. You may hear someone say something like, “I literally lost 10 pounds in two days.” This is probably not possible and so this person has not used the word *literally* properly.

Give someone a hand

To give someone a hand is to offer to help another person. You can ask a person, “Can you give me a hand?” or “Do you need a hand?” We can also say *to lend a hand*.

Here are a couple more examples.

Don: Can you give me a hand with my bag? It’s really heavy.
Tyler: No problem.

Mike: My homework this week is so difficult.
Spencer: Let me know if you need a hand. I am pretty good at math.

We can use exactly the same expression to mean something completely different. *To give someone a hand* can also mean *to clap* or *to applaud*. At a concert, the audience or people watching give the performers a hand when they give a good show. Or when one person introduces another to a large crowd of people, the first person might ask the crowd to give that next person a hand.

Here is a dialogue for the last example above.

Introducer: Let’s give a hand for Joseph Lee!
[The audience claps.]
Joseph Lee: Thank you so much.

That about does it

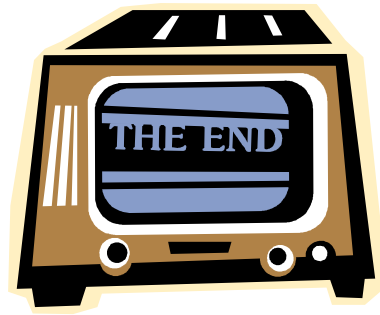
At the end of this episode, Robin says “That about does it.” Have you heard him say that in another episode? This is another way of saying that something is done, finished or complete. So when Robin says “That about does it” he says that because it is the end of the episode. You can also say “That does it” with the same meaning.

Here are some other examples with *that about does it*.

Frank: Are you done fixing my bike yet?
Jeanie: I just have to do one more thing... OK, that about does it. The bike is fixed now.

Peter: I can’t sleep because the neighbour’s music is too loud.

Kevin: I know. Let's wait a few more minutes and see if they turn it down.
[15 minutes later]
Peter: It seems like the music is getting louder.
Kevin: That does it. I am going over to tell them to turn the music down.



Quiz (See the answers at the end of this Lipservice.)

1. Having a tissue in your pocket is _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) Handful
- b) Handsome
- c) Handy
- d) Hand

2. **Carmen:** Oh, I am so sick. I have had a cold for 3 days.
Annie: That's too bad. Do you have a cough?
Carmen: No, I just have a _____ nose.

- a) Funny
- b) Runny
- c) Hot
- d) Leaky

3. What name brand is often used in place of the word *tissue*?

- a) Royale
- b) Kleenex
- c) Scottie
- d) Cleanex

4. What does it mean when someone is *good with their hands*?

- a) They can fix and repair things with their hands
- b) They can arm wrestle
- c) They are bad with their feet
- d) They can build a house

5. What is the job title of a person who fixes and repairs things around a house or apartment?

- a) A maintenance man
- b) A handyman
- c) A handy guy
- d) A handyman or maintenance man

6. If you live in a rented space, who do you call first if the doorbell is broken?

- a) The landlord
- b) The king of the land
- c) The lord of the land
- d) The land prince

7. Terry: Could I ask you a favour?

Sam: Sure. What do you need help with?

Terry: I bought a new bed and I need a hand moving it into my place.

Sam: Sure, no problem.

What do the underlined words mean?

- a) More than one hand
- b) Literally one hand
- c) A friend
- d) Some help

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