

## Catch Word #44 – All Talk and No Action

### Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone, this is Harp...

Maura: And Maura...

Harp: And we are bringing you the Catchword podcast at Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Maura: Yes, that is our website. So, if you want to know more about any of our episodes, you can go to that website and you can see the transcript and detailed explanation in our Lipservice.

Harp: Yeah, exactly.

Maura: You can also check out our blog.

Harp: Our blog is fantastic.

Maura: Yeah, we write little stories about what is going on with us...things happening.

Harp: Exactly, movies we have seen, things we have done on the weekend.

Maura: Right, check it out.

Harp: So today we are doing the Catchword podcast, which is where we take an expression and we explain it, and we give you examples of how it's used and we give you related expressions.

Maura: Exactly, we take a very close look at a common expression.

Harp: Exactly, so what's today's expression?

Maura: Today's expression is **to be all talk and no action**.

Harp: Yeah, **to be all talk and no action**.

Maura: Right, so that is the full expression, but most of the time people say only **to be all talk**.

Harp: Yeah, **to be all talk**.

- Maura: Right, but, you kind of know or assume the whole expression.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: So you use this expression when you are talking about a person. So you could say, “he is **all talk**,” or “she is **all talk**.”
- Harp: Exactly, so this means that someone only says that they will do something, but they never actually do it.
- Maura: They talk about doing something but they don’t do it. Let’s remind everybody what the full expression is.
- Harp: Yeah, the full expression is **all talk and no action**. So they talk about it but they don’t take any action.
- Maura: Exactly, so this is a more literal expression, you can see the meaning in it.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: But usually or sometimes we don’t say the whole expression. We only say that someone is **all talk**.
- Harp: Yeah exactly. Sometimes people say something but they never have the intention of doing it.
- Maura: Right, so the person talks a lot about doing something but doesn’t normally do it. And we should also mention that it’s normally something that is big or important and they only talk about it. So it’s something that other people are hoping that they do or need them to do it.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: There’s actually a really old quote that is related to this expression.
- Harp: Yeah, the quote is “**The greatest talkers are always the least doers.**”
- Maura: Right, I will repeat that for you just to be really clear, the quote was “**the greatest talkers are always the least doers.**” And that was from the year 1670.
- Harp: Exactly, so it’s a very old quote.

- Maura: And who said it?
- Harp: John Ray.
- Maura: Right. So what really means that people who talk a lot about doing something are often the people that don't do it.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: So, it's kind of funny and sometimes true. So let's give some examples now.
- Harp: Ok. God, Jay is so annoying.
- Maura: What happened?
- Harp: He talks about how he wants to be a big actor but he never does anything.
- Maura: Yeah.
- Harp: He says he is going to Hollywood but he never moves. He never makes any plans. He just talks and talks and talks about it.
- Maura: Right, he is definitely **all talk**.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: Cool, that was our first example. So Jay is **all talk and no action** because he doesn't actually try to become a movie star, he just talks about it.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: That example is similar to a friend of mine. He says he wants to be in a band, he wants to play music but he hasn't even started to learn how to play the guitar.
- Harp: That's actually pretty funny.
- Maura: So he talks about it a lot and he doesn't do anything.
- Harp: He is **all talk**.
- Maura: Definitely. Let's give another dialogue example.
- Harp: Good idea.

- Maura: So Harp what's new with you?
- Harp: I am a little bit frustrated with work.
- Maura: What happened? What's going on?
- Harp: Well, my co-worker always promises to complete this project that we are working on but he never does it.
- Maura: That sounds like he is **all talk**.
- Harp: He is definitely **all talk**.
- Maura: That can be so frustrating.
- Harp: Yup.
- Maura: So, what are some other real life examples of people who are **all talk**.
- Harp: Well, the best example that comes to my head is politicians. They are often **all talk**.
- Maura: For sure, especially if there is an election.
- Harp: They will make lots of promises and they won't **follow up**.
- Maura: Yeah, they say they are going to do a lot of things, a lot of good things, and then they don't actually do it.
- Harp: Yeah, they're often **all talk**.
- Maura: It's kind of **sad**.
- Harp: Really **sad**. So, now, there is no synonym for this expression but there are some related expressions.
- Maura: Yeah, we could say **empty words** or **empty speech**.
- Harp: Yeah, or even **empty promise**.
- Maura: So it means that something that someone says is empty. That it doesn't mean anything, they don't mean it, they're not going to do anything about that.

- Harp: Exactly, so when something is empty there's nothing in it. So an **empty speech** or an **empty promise**, it means that they won't do it.
- Maura: Right it means nothing. So what example could we use with one of these expressions?
- Harp: Again with the politician. They often give **empty speeches**, they are all talk no action - it's an empty speech.
- Maura: Right and they definitely make promises that they don't keep, so that's **empty promises**.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. Should we do a dialogue example?
- Maura: Yeah, let's do one more. So, what are you doing today?
- Harp: Well, I was supposed to meet my friend but she always tells me she's going to meet me and cancels **at the last minute**.
- Maura: Oh, that is annoying.
- Harp: Yeah, it's an **empty promise**.
- Maura: Yeah for sure. Doesn't sound like a good friend.
- Harp: No, not at all.
- Maura: OK cool, so we mentioned **empty speech, empty words, empty promise** but the main expression was...
- Harp: ***To be all talk.***
- Maura: Right and the full expression is ***to be all talk and no action***, but remember we often say only ***to be all talk***.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: OK cool. Don't forget to go to our website or you can check us out on iTunes.
- Harp: And if you like what you hear, leave us a comment on the website or on iTunes.
- Maura: Yeah, we love hearing from you. Thanks a lot.

Harp:           Bye everyone.

Maura:        Bye.

## Detailed Explanation

### All talk and no action

**All talk and no action** means that someone talks a lot about doing something that is usually important, but never does it. A person is **all talk** because he talks a lot and **no action** because he does no actions or there are no results.

This expression is often shortened. People often say only that someone is **all talk**. We don't need to say the full expression, but people understand it as the full expression anyway. They have exactly the same meaning. To say someone is **all talk and no action**, or just someone is **all talk**, has exactly the same meaning.

Here is one more example.

Carl: My friend keeps telling me he's going to build a boat, but he never does.  
Shannon: Some people are just **all talk**.

OR

Carl: My friend keeps telling me he's going to build a boat, but he never does.  
Shannon: Some people are just **all talk and no action**.

There are other expressions that can be shortened and mean the same thing too. For example, the expression, *When in Rome, do as the Romans do* can be shortened to *When in Rome* and it means exactly the same thing.

(This is a completely separate expression – but if you're curious about what it means, just ask us via email!)

### "The greatest talkers are always the least doers"

This quote, "**The greatest talkers are always the least doers**," has the same meaning as the focus expression.

This expression is attributed to John Ray in 1670. John Ray was a naturalist and published important works in England.

This old quote can also be called a **proverb**. A proverb is a popular expression that expresses a common truth and is usually very old.

Do you think people who talk a lot about doing something generally don't do it? Do you think this is true?

Most people in North America would probably agree. It is always a negative thing to say about someone. If you listen again to our examples in this episode, you will see that we are never happy when someone is **all talk and no action**.

### Follow up

**To follow up** means to do the next necessary step in a process or to work ahead toward a finish. One step follows another.

Harp says that politicians are not good at **following up**. Politicians are basically the same the whole world over. They say things they are going to do - and then they don't do it!

**To follow up** or **a follow-up** are used quite often in business and politics. In those areas there are steps that need to be taken to complete various projects. Here are some other examples with **follow up**.

Karen: Did you send them the press release?

Bob: Yes, but now I need to **follow up** with a phone call.

Derrick: Are you finished with all your meetings now?

Nancy: I still have one more **follow-up** meeting tomorrow.

Lois: I will give you a **follow-up** call some time later this week.

Gary: Great! I look forward to hearing from you.

### It's sad

Harp and Maura both say that politicians not following up is **sad**. That doesn't sound like the regular definition of **sad**. **Sad** can also mean really bad – and more like pitiful. So Harp and Maura are not going to cry, they just think that dishonest politicians are not good.

Here are some other examples with the word **sad** meaning really bad.

Howie: How was the movie you saw tonight?

Lily: It was so boring, it was **sad**.

Kiley: I can't believe what she was wearing at the party last night.

Beatrice: Yeah, it was kind of **sad**. She needs a new stylist.

### Empty words, empty speech, empty promise

An empty jar means that there is nothing in it. In the same way, anything empty means that there is nothing in it. The same idea applies to the expressions **empty words**, **empty speech**, and **empty promise**. Someone says something, but there is nothing true in what they say or they will not do the things they say.



Here are more examples with these expressions.

Sarah: At meetings the boss always makes so many **empty promises**.

Joe: I know! It's crazy. He never does what he says he is going to do.

Oscar: I am sorry. I will never do it again.

Caroline: I don't believe it. You don't mean it. Those are just **empty words**.

Stella: If I have to listen to another **empty speech**...

Francis: I know, it's frustrating to listen to, isn't it?

### Speech/speeches

There are two different ways that we can use **speech** as a noun or thing. In this episode and in the example above, we used **speech** to mean a formal talk to an audience. One person stands and speaks while a group of other people listen.

**Speech** can mean simply talk. For example, "I talked to him on the phone but his **speech** wasn't clear." In this case, we are not talking about a formal talk - **speech** just means the way he talks.

**Speech** as a formal talk is a specific event, but **speech** as just talking is general. Here is a comparative example.

I like to give **speeches**. (formal talks)

I express myself better in writing than in **speech**. (talking)

### At the last minute

When something is done **at the last minute**, it is completed just before a deadline or the beginning of an event. In films, people are often saved **at the last minute**, just before they would die. Or students sometimes don't study early and so need to study **at the last minute**, before a test. It is not really about a minute, but just the last possible moment to do something.

Harp gives the example of a friend who cancels plans **at the last minute**. This means that the friend cancels just before they are going to meet.

Here are a couple more examples.

Matilda: I was just going to hand in my assignment and I noticed **at the last minute** that I had forgotten to put my name on it.

Chad: You're lucky you noticed it.

Pat: I don't have time to meet right now. I will meet with you just before the presentation and we can review it.

Justine: I don't want to do that **at the last minute**. Can't you find some time to meet before?

We can also say, **to the last minute**, like, "They waited **to the last minute** to prepare for the presentation."

#### Doesn't sound...

Yes, in English we like to cut out words sometimes when we are speaking. The sentence, "**Doesn't sound like a good friend**," is missing a subject, or a word at the beginning. The proper sentence should be, "She **doesn't sound like a good friend**." Sometimes when we know the subject we cut it out. This is a slang style of speaking and should not be written like this.

It is difficult to say exactly when it would be appropriate to leave out the subject. As a non-Native speaker it is probably best to ALWAYS say the subject. But be aware when listening that native speakers may sometimes leave out the subject. Here are some other examples where the first word is left out.

Gary: How was class?

Frida: Sure wasn't fun, but we learned a lot. (It sure...)

Harry: I am almost done with the book, and I can't even imagine what will happen at the end.

Jackie: Seems interesting. Maybe I can borrow the book when you are done. (It seems...)

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

1. What is the complete expression? All talk and \_\_\_\_\_.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) some action
- b) action
- c) all action
- d) no action

2. "The greatest talkers are always the least doers." This type of expression is called a \_\_\_\_\_.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) prodigy
- b) proverb
- c) promise
- d) party

3. What does it mean *to follow up*?

- a) to do the necessary next steps
- b) to follow behind something
- c) to read something closely
- d) to walk away from

4. Jason: How was the party last night?  
Bernie: It was a bit \_\_\_\_\_. No one showed up.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) god
- b) sad

- c) fun
- d) (none of the above)

**5. Three similar expressions are empty speech, empty words and empty \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Please fill in the blank.**

- a) promises
- b) premises
- c) proverbs
- d) party

**6. Harp says that her friend cancelled their plans \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Please fill in the blank.**

- a) on the last minute
- b) in the last minute
- c) at the last minute
- d) the last minute

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