

## Catch Word #50 – Shrug it off

### Transcript

Robin: Hey, we're back. This is Robin.

Jessie: And Jessie.

Robin: And we're here with the Catch Word podcast at Culips.com.

Jessie: And our Catch Word podcast is where we take a close look at one word or expression, we break it down, give you examples of everyday conversation, and give you some synonyms.

Robin: Absolutely. And if you want more of a detailed explanation, a transcript, and all that other good stuff, go to our website, C-U-L-I-P-S.com, and sign up, become a member, and download it.

Jessie: And you can also download our podcast from iTunes.

Robin: And today we have a bunch of special expressions.

Jessie: We do, and one in particular.

Robin: Mmhmm. The first one is **to shrug it off**.

Jessie: **To shrug it off.**

Robin: **To shrug it off.**

Jessie: So, I know that to shrug your shoulders is when you kind of lift your shoulders. People do it when they don't know something. When you say, "I don't know," and you kind of lift your shoulders up. And you could also do it when you say "I don't care, it doesn't matter to me." What would be an example of when you would **shrug it off**?

Robin: Well, I can give you a really good example. The other day I went to work and a lot of people have been angry at my workplace about what my boss has been doing.

Jessie: OK.

Robin: And somebody stood up in a meeting and told him, "Listen, I don't like what you're doing with the company."

Jessie: Wow! Did he get really upset?

Robin: You know what? He didn't. He just **shrugged it off** and continued the meeting.

Jessie: OK, so to **shrug it off** means to not care about something, to just forget about it.

Robin: Yeah, he forgot about it. He was like, "OK, I understand your position, **we'll see what we can do**," forgot about it, and **moved on**.

Jessie: OK, I see. So, I know that another example that I would have at work is sometimes, if my boss says something about my work, maybe gives me some criticism, says something I could be doing better, sometimes that kind of hurts my feelings but I know that it's just work, it's just my job. So I try to just **shrug it off**, and, you know, not get upset about it, not care, **just shrug it off**.

- Robin: Forget about it. It's not a big deal.
- Jessie: So, are there any other expressions that we can use to talk about dealing with problems?
- Robin: Absolutely. Another expression that we use to deal with problems is **to roll with the punches**.
- Jessie: **To roll with the punches?**
- Robin: **To roll with the punches.**
- Jessie: Where does that expression come from?
- Robin: In fact, interestingly enough, this expression comes from boxing. Basically, in boxing, one way of dealing with someone's offense, dealing with someone's punch, is to roll with it.
- Jessie: OK, so you're kind of turning your body away as they're punching you.
- Robin: Absolutely. So, for example, if you run into a punch, it hurts. But if you pull back and move away from the punch, it doesn't hurt.
- Jessie: OK, so what does **to roll with the punches** mean in terms of everyday use as an idiom?
- Robin: It means if something happens, something serious happens, you don't let it hurt you, you just **move on**.
- Jessie: OK, so you just **shrug it off**.
- Robin: You just **shrug it off**.
- Jessie: You just keep going and you **roll with the punches**. You deal with things when they happen but you don't get too upset or worried.
- Robin: Yep. So I lost my job, "Hey I'm just **rolling with the punches**, I'm looking for a new job."
- Jessie: OK, so even though something bad happened, you lost your job, you're just **rolling with the punches**, you're just not letting it bother you, and **moving on** to the next thing.
- Robin: Absolutely.
- Jessie: I like that one a lot.
- Robin: Another expression that is really closely related is **to pick up the pieces**.
- Jessie: **Pick up the pieces.**
- Robin: **To pick up the pieces.**
- Jessie: So I know that one. That means, kind of, if something bad happens in your life, it's almost like your life was broken apart, so to go on, to move on with your life, you have to **pick up the pieces**.
- Robin: Absolutely. Often when someone dies, for example, it might seem like your life has fallen apart but you **pick up the pieces** and you **move on**, eventually.

- Jessie: OK, so yeah, after something bad happens, you're kind of gathering your courage, gathering your strength, **picking up the pieces** to **move on**.
- Robin: Absolutely. So today we had three expressions and we'll just go over them one more time.
- Jessie: Yeah, we did very inspirational expressions today, they're all very positive.
- Robin: Absolutely.
- Jessie: The first one was **to shrug it off**.
- Robin: **To shrug it off**. And that is just to forget about something, to let it go, to get over something.
- Jessie: And the second was **to roll with the punches**.
- Robin: **To roll with the punches**, so not to let something hurt you.
- Jessie: And the last was **to pick up the pieces**.
- Robin: And **to pick up the pieces**, if something tragic happens, something serious happens, you're able to get your life together and **move on**.
- Jessie: So, we hope that nothing bad happens to you guys, but if it does, you can just **shrug it off**, **roll with the punches**, or **pick up the pieces** and **move on**.
- Robin: And **move on**. And I guess we're about to **move on**, 'cause that's the end of our podcast. I hope you guys had a good one. This has been Robin.
- Jessie: And Jessie.
- Robin: And we're signing off.
- Jessie: Bye!

## Detailed Explanation

### To shrug it off

As Jessie mentions in this episode, the expressions used in this podcast are all very positive. They're about not letting things bother you. **To shrug something off** is to not care about it.

In North America, and most Western cultures, shrugging is a physical action done to show that the person shrugging doesn't care about something, that it doesn't matter. It's also sometimes done to say "I don't know." Shrugging is a form of nonverbal communication, or body language.

Here are a couple of examples of how you could use the verb **to shrug it off** in conversation:

Kevin: Hey Jacob, I heard that Tina did badly on the math test. Is she upset about it?

Jacob: Nope. She just **shrugged it off**. The test was only worth 5% of our final grade anyway.

Susan: Did you talk to your boyfriend about how much it bothers you when he doesn't return your calls?

Fran: I did, but he just **shrugged it off** like it was no big deal. I'm so mad at him!

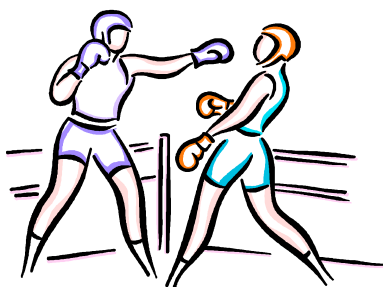


### To roll with the punches

Did you know that Robin used to take boxing lessons? He's a big fan of the sport! Maybe that's why this great boxing idiom was on his mind!

In boxing, to roll with a punch is to turn your body away from someone hitting you so that their punch doesn't hit you as hard. Boxers roll their bodies away from punches so that they don't get hurt.

Another word for punch that Robin uses in this episode is blow. The word blow can be used to mean any type of hit, such as a punch, a slap, or a kick.



As an idiom, **to roll with the punches** is to take whatever bad things happen and adjust to them. Robin gives an example of **rolling with the punches** after losing his job. Instead of sitting around feeling sorry for himself, he gets back out there and starts looking for a new job right away.

If you'd like to use this idiom in conversation, keep in mind that we always say **to roll with the punches** (plural), never *to roll with the punch* (singular).

Here are some examples.

Frances: If you want to start your own business, you have to learn to **roll with the punches**. You'll face many problems and you have to be able to deal with them and adjust quickly when your circumstances change.

Belinda: I was printing out my essay last night to hand in this morning, but my printer broke!

Mel: Oh no! What did you do?

Belinda: I just **rolled with the punches**. I went to the library this morning and printed it there.

### To pick up the pieces

Have you ever felt so sad that you felt like your heart was broken into a thousand little pieces?!

That feeling is where the term **to pick up the pieces** comes from. Sometimes when something very bad happens, we can feel like our heart, or even our whole life, has broken apart into pieces that have fallen down all around us. When we finally start to feel better and life starts to get back to normal again, we are **picking up the pieces** and moving on.



The expression **to pick up the pieces** is usually only used after something tragic or very bad occurs. This is in contrast to the terms *to shrug it off* and *to roll with the punches*, which can be used to talk about anything even slightly bad or unpleasant.

For instance, you could say, "The store was out of orange juice, but I just shrugged it off and bought apple juice instead." You would never use **to pick up the pieces** in a conversation like that.

Here are some examples of the type of serious situations that using to pick up the pieces would be appropriate.

Christina: After my husband died, I was devastated. But eventually I **picked up the pieces** and did my best to raise my two children on my own.

Greg: You must have been really upset when you lost your job after working at that company for 10 years.  
Tom: I sure was. For a couple of weeks I just sat around doing nothing, but eventually I had to **pick up the pieces** and start looking for new work.

#### To go with the flow

This expression isn't discussed in the podcast, but the phrase **to go with the flow** can be used in a similar way as *to roll with the punches*.

**To go with the flow** is to not worry about what might happen in the future; to just respond to events as they happen. Imagine a leaf floating in a river. The leaf doesn't think about where it's going to go next and it doesn't try to change its direction. It just goes wherever the flow of water sends it.

The main difference between *to roll with the punches* and **to go with the flow** is that *to roll with the punches* is usually talking about dealing specifically with bad events or circumstances (getting punched is usually a bad thing, after all!) But **to go with the flow** is a way of dealing with anything unexpected or unplanned that happens, whether it's good or bad.

Here's an example where the speakers could use either *to roll with the punches* or **to go with the flow**:

Shane: I heard you didn't get picked for the hockey team this year, that's too bad.

Derek: It's no big deal. I can **go with the flow**. I'm going to sign up for the football team instead.

Because not getting picked for the hockey team is a bad thing for Derek, he also could have said:

Derek: It's no big deal. I can roll with the punches. I'm going to sign up for the football team instead.

Now here's an example where using *to roll with the punches* wouldn't be very appropriate:

Sandra: I heard your sister came for a surprise visit last weekend, how was it?

Amy: It was a lot of fun. Since I didn't know she was coming, I hadn't planned anything for us to do, so we just had **to go with the flow** and do things spontaneously.

Since her sister's visit was a good thing to Amy, it wouldn't make sense for her to talk about rolling with the punches, but **to go with the flow** is the perfect expression to use in this situation.

I'll see what I can do

The phrase **I'll see what I can do** is very common in business here in North America. It's a polite way of saying, "I'll try to do something about your problem, but I can't promise that I'll be able to solve it."

If you call a toll-free customer service number to complain about a problem you're having with your cell phone, your cable TV, or your internet service, there's a good chance you'll hear this expression!

To move on

The expression **to move on** can have a few different meanings. Robin and Jessie used it at least two different ways in this podcast, and there are other ways to use it too.

Robin talks about how, during a meeting, somebody made a negative comment to his boss. His boss didn't get upset about the comment though, he just **moved on**. In this case, **moving on** means continuing with the meeting; moving forward as if the negative comment had never been made at all.

This is a pretty general use of the verb **to move on**. In this case, it's simply used as a synonym for to continue.

But the verb **to move on** can have a more specific meaning too. In this episode Jessie talks about how, after something really bad happens, you eventually have to pick up the pieces and **move on** with your life. In this case, **moving on** isn't something you can just do immediately. After a tragedy, it can take years for a person to **move on** and stop dwelling on what happened. When it's used in this way, the phrase **to move on** is actually a shortened way of saying **to move on with one's life**.

Here are some examples of the verb **to move on** used first in talking about something unimportant and then about something sad:

Mr. Kresky: OK everyone, we only have a few minutes left in this meeting, so if no one has any questions, let's **move on** and discuss the budget.

Carmen: How was your date with Will last night?

Judy: It was really great! You know, I was so upset when Todd and I broke up last year, but I think I'm finally ready **to move on** [with my life].

To brush it off

This phrase isn't mentioned in today's podcast episode, but its meaning is almost identical to the term *to shrug it off*. In any of the examples that Robin and Jessie give using *to shrug it off*, you could also use **to brush it off**.

For example, Robin and Jessie could have the following conversation:

Robin: Somebody stood up in a meeting and told my boss, "I don't like what you're doing with the company."

Jessie: Wow! Did he get upset?

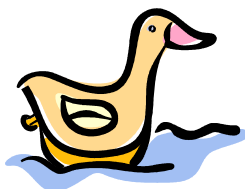
Robin: He didn't. He just **brushed it off** and continued the meeting.

Like water off a duck's back

If something is **like water off a duck's back** to someone, it means that person isn't bothered by it or affected by it at all.

This is a fun idiom because it creates a very interesting image in your imagination!

Did you know that ducks (and other water birds) have a special kind of oil on their feathers that keeps them from getting soaked when they go swimming? The water just rolls over the birds' feathers and off of their bodies, so underneath their feathers, the skin never gets wet!



This idiom is often used to talk about insults or criticism.

Here are some examples of the idiom in context:

Sometimes her older brothers teased her, but she didn't care. Their words rolled off of her **like water off a duck's back**.

Megan: I really admire Beth.

Ted: How come?

Megan: When the boss criticizes her work, she never lets it bother her. It's **like water off a duck's back** with her. I wish I could be more like that.

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

1. What is the main part of your body that you move when you shrug?

- a) your eyes
- b) your head
- c) your legs
- d) your shoulders

2. Fill in the blank in the following sentence.

John didn't care if people laughed at him. Their laughter was like water off a \_\_\_\_\_ back.

- a) cat's
- b) dog's
- c) duck's
- d) turkey's

3. What is another word you can use to mean a *punch*?

- a) a blow
- b) a bowl
- c) a kick
- d) a slap

4. Which of the following phrases would you **ONLY** use after something bad happened?

- a) to continue on
- b) to go with the flow
- c) to move on
- d) to pick up the pieces

5. What does it mean when someone shrugs?

- a) "I don't care."
- b) "I don't like that."
- c) "No"
- d) "Yes"

6. What sport does the idiom *to roll with the punches* come from?

- a) baseball
- b) boxing
- c) fencing
- d) punchball

7. Cynthia: Oh no! My sister is coming to visit for a whole week and I haven't planned anything for us to do!

David: Don't worry about it, just \_\_\_\_\_.

Fill in the blank.

- a) go with the flow



- b) pick up the pieces
  - c) punch a duck's back
  - d) roll with the flow
8. Which of the following is a customer service representative likely to say to you on the phone if you ask for his help with fixing a problem?
- a) Do you see what I do?
  - b) I'll do it and see it.
  - c) I'll see if I can do.
  - d) I'll see what I can do.

**Answers:** 1.d 2.c 3.a 4.d 5.a 6.b 7. a 8. d