

Catch Word #52 – Party Pooper

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone, this is Harp.

Maura: And Maura.

Harp: And we're here at Culips bringing you a Catch Word podcast.

Maura: Don't forget to go to our website, where you can get the transcript for this episode and all our episodes. And in addition to the transcript you can find even more explanation and a quiz.

Harp: Yup, those are found in the Lipservice with each episode, and the website is Culips, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com

Maura: Good. So today, like you said, Harp, we're going to do a Catch Word episode.

Harp: Yes. The Catch Word episodes are where we take a phrase and we break it down. We explain it, we give you examples and we give you synonyms.

Maura: Yes, exactly.

Harp: Maura, what is today's Catch Word?

Maura: So today's expression is **party pooper**.

Harp: **Party pooper**.

Maura: Yeah, it's a funny little expression. What—or should I say who—is a **party pooper**?

Harp: So a **party pooper** is someone who ruins the fun, whether at a party or whether in just a normal conversation. When you're having a fun time, **they** kind of ruin the **atmosphere**.

Maura: Yeah, so maybe you're doing some kind of fun social activity, like a party, and this person isn't participating.

Harp: Yeah, **they're** either being boring or maybe **they're** being antisocial and not talking or maybe **they'll** start telling a sad or boring story.

- Maura: Yeah. I kind of imagine a group of people laughing together but one person not laughing.
- Harp: Yeah, sitting in the corner **scowling**.
- Maura: Yeah, that's a **party pooper**.
- Harp: Exactly. Should we give some examples?
- Maura: Sure. Well, can you think of any examples where you encountered a **party pooper**?
- Harp: Yes, I for sure can think of an example. A couple of weeks ago, one of my friends threw a big party at **their** house. It was fun, everyone was laughing, we're having a good time, and then another friend came to the party. But this friend was so sick; he just sat in the corner miserable the whole night. He was such a **party pooper**.
- Maura: Yeah, I think if you're sick, you're kind of a **party pooper**, because you're tired, you're not feeling good.
- Harp: Yeah, you're not **joining in** the fun.
- Maura: Yeah, sometimes you might be at a party with a lot of people having a good time, and then one person keeps talking about work and complaining about work. That person's kind of a **party pooper** too.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly.
- Maura: So, another interesting point we should mention is that being a **party pooper** is not a good thing.
- Harp: No, not at all.
- Maura: Right, so generally you don't normally tell someone **they're a party pooper**.
- Harp: Yeah, but you could say it in maybe a joking way. Should we give an example?
- Maura: OK, good.
- Harp: Hey Maura, how are you?
- Maura: Oh, I'm OK, you know, I'm just tired.

- Harp: You're not having fun?
- Maura: I'm just ... I'm ... I'm really tired and sleepy, you know?
- Harp: Did you hear the story that Robin was telling? Wasn't it so funny?
- Maura: Yeah, it was OK.
- Harp: Maura, why are you being such a **party pooper**?
- Maura: I'm sorry, I've just ... I've just been too busy at work lately.
- Harp: Oh no, you should get some rest.
- Maura: Yeah, maybe I'll go home. I don't wanna be a **party pooper**.
- Maura: OK good. So there's a great example. Because we're friends you could say that to me and it's not so serious.
- Harp: Yeah. Another important point to make is that you don't have to be at a party to be a **party pooper**; it can be any sort of fun occasion.
- Maura: Right, even at work, for example, with your colleagues. Maybe you're having a fun conversation around the water cooler and then your colleague says, "Sorry I have to get back to work."
- Harp: Yeah, **they** could be a **party pooper** there. So you're at work but this person could be a **party pooper**.
- Maura: Yeah, good. So there are actually other ways we can call someone a **party pooper**.
- Harp: Yes. A synonym for **party pooper** is a **wet blanket**.
- Maura: Mm-hm, a **wet blanket**.
- Harp: Yes, a **wet blanket**.
- Maura: So if you can imagine what a wet blanket is, it's not very pleasant.
- Harp: Nope.
- Maura: So imagine covering yourself with a wet blanket—ew!

- Harp: Yeah, not fun. So, I think this example came from fire fighting. They would use a wet blanket to put out a fire. And so in this example, a **wet blanket** is putting out a fire, which is fun.
- Maura: Right, so the fire represents the fun and energy and when you put a wet blanket over it, it stops all of that fun.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. So you can call someone a **wet blanket** when **they're** being a **party pooper**.
- Maura: Exactly. So what would be a good example of a **wet blanket**?
- Harp: Maura, remember that time that we were laughing and having fun at Jessie's party?
- Maura: Yeah, that was so fun.
- Harp: Yeah, that was fun, until Laura came over.
- Maura: Yup.
- Harp: Yeah, she told us that really sad story.
- Maura: Yeah.
- Harp: She was a bit of a **wet blanket**; she really ruined all our fun.
- Maura: Yeah, she did. We were laughing so hard before that. But she was a **wet blanket** that night.
- Harp: Yeah.
- Maura: OK great. So that's another example of how our friend was a **party pooper** or a **wet blanket**.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly.
- Maura: And we even have one more similar expression.
- Harp: Yes. This expression is **stick in the mud**.

- Maura: Right. So just like you can call someone a **party pooper** or a **wet blanket**, you can also say that someone is a ***stick in the mud***.
- Harp: Yeah, a ***stick in the mud***.
- Maura: And this one, if you imagine as well, is interesting. So you have a stick in mud, and when you have something in the mud you can't move; you're not doing anything, kind of like someone who doesn't wanna have fun.
- Harp: Exactly. Should we give a dialogue example for this one?
- Maura: OK, cool.
- Maura: So last night we wanted to go to this new restaurant.
- Harp: Oh yeah? Did you try it?
- Maura: Well we didn't end up trying it because Robin didn't want to.
- Harp: Oh. Why?
- Maura: I don't know. He wanted to go to the same place that we always went to. He was ... he was being a bit of a ***stick in the mud***.
- Harp: Aw, that's not fun.
- Maura: No.
- Maura: So they're really all the same: a ***stick in the mud***, a ***party pooper***, or a ***wet blanket***.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: But remember: you don't want to call someone any of these names in a serious way.
- Harp: Yeah, because it's a negative thing.
- Maura: Yeah, so maybe about a close friend.
- Harp: Yeah.
- Maura: All right that looks good.
- Harp: Yeah, that's about it.

Maura: So remember to go to our website if you would like more explanations for this episode.

Harp: Yeah, that's Culips.com.

Maura: C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And this has been Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

Maura: and we'll talk to you soon.

Harp: Bye everyone!

Maura: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

Party pooper

As Harp explains in this episode, a **party pooper** is a person who ruins the fun, either at an actual party or during any fun, upbeat event or conversation.

The term **party pooper** may sound strange to anyone who knows the word *poop*, which is sometimes used (especially by children) as a slang word for defecating – going to the bathroom, or feces – bodily waste. But **party pooper** doesn't actually have anything to do with that kind of poop, though it might seem like someone did poop on the party!

The term **party pooper** might be related to the adjective *pooped*. *To be pooped* is to be tired or exhausted. Someone who is pooped has no energy or liveliness. Similarly, a **party pooper** ruins a party, spoiling the party's energy and making the party boring, slow, or uninteresting.

Important: The term **party pooper** is a very unique expression. It can only be said in this one particular way. If you try to change the expression or use the words in a different order, it will sound very strange to English speakers, even though it may seem like a phrase should make sense based on the term **party pooper**.

For example:

You can't call someone a *pooper of parties*.

You can't call someone a *fun pooper* or a *gathering pooper*.

You can't use *to poop a party* as a verb.

You can't say that a party was *pooped* by someone.

Wet blanket

One of the synonyms of *party pooper* that Maura and Harp discuss in this episode is **wet blanket**.

This term comes from the use of an actual wet blanket for putting out a fire. An actual wet blanket can stop a fire just like a person who is a **wet blanket** can stop other people's fun.

Metaphors and similes

A metaphor is something that is used to describe one thing by comparing it to another. In the metaphor of a wet blanket, the fire is the fun, and the person ruining the fun is the wet blanket.

So when Harp says, "In this example, a **wet blanket** is putting out a fire, which is fun" she doesn't mean that *fires* are fun, she means that the fire *represents* fun; the fire is a metaphor for fun.

A simile is a lot like a metaphor, except that in a metaphor we say that one thing *is* another thing. For example, we say the fire *is* the fun. In a simile, we say something is *like* something else.

A lot of slang terms and idioms come from metaphors and similes. Here are some examples of each. Notice that the similes always contain the words *like* or *as*.

Metaphor examples:

You are my rock. (You are very stable and solid and a source of strength for me.)

He's a pig. (He is rude or he eats a lot, depending on the context.)

The test was a breeze. (The test was easy.)

Simile examples:

She's as cold as ice. (Her personality is very unfriendly and aloof.)

Life is like a box of chocolates. (Life is full of different kinds of experiences.)

His words were like knives. (His words were unkind and hurtful.)

Stick in the mud

The phrase **stick in the mud** is a metaphor for someone who's no fun. A person who's a **stick in the mud** doesn't like to try new things or have new experiences. They just want to stay where they are like a stick that's stuck in some mud.

Here are some examples of the phrase **stick in the mud** that also include the idioms *wet blanket* and *party pooper*:

Shaun: Are you coming to Felix's party tonight?

Kayla: No, I think I'm going to stay home.

Shaun: Come on, don't be such a **stick in the mud**.

Kayla: I'd like to go, but I really don't feel well. If I went I'd just be a **party pooper** and ruin everyone else's fun.

Eve: Can you believe what a **wet blanket** Sam was last night?

Jason: I know. He never wants to try anything new. He's such a **stick in the mud**.

Killjoy, spoilsport, downer

These three terms aren't discussed in this podcast episode, but they're similar to the term party pooper. **Killjoys**, **spoilsports**, and **downers** are all people who ruin other people's fun. These words can be used just like party pooper to describe someone who is negative or dull and stops other people from having fun.

Examples:

Debbie is always talking about all the bad things that are happening in the world. She's such a **downer**.

Steve told his sister about the surprise party that their parents were planning for her. He's a real **spoilsport** sometimes.

Karen doesn't let her roommate play loud music or invite any friends over. She's a total **killjoy**.

Join in

Harp describes a party pooper as someone who doesn't **join in** the fun. **Join in** is one of those strange little phrases in English called a phrasal verb.

Sometimes a phrasal verb has a different meaning than the verb alone. For example, *get up* has a different meaning than *get*.

Sometimes the meaning of the phrasal verb is the same as the meaning of the verb alone. For example, *fall down* has the same meaning as *fall*.

And sometimes the phrasal verb may or may not have the same meaning as the verb alone, depending on the situation. For example, *join the fun* and **join in the fun** have the same meaning, but *join a gym* and **join in a gym** are different. In fact, **join in a gym** doesn't even make sense in English.

Unfortunately, there's no clear rule about when and how to use a phrasal verb that means the same thing as the verb alone. A native speaker might say *come to my house* or *come over to my house* and mean the exact same thing. Becoming familiar with these kinds of optional phrasal verbs just takes time and practice.

Antisocial

Harp talks about someone at a party being **antisocial** and not talking. In informal conversation, the adjective **antisocial** is sometimes used, as Harp uses it here, to mean unfriendly, shy, or simply not very social.

But **antisocial** behaviour is also a medical term that describes a certain set of specific behaviours that are seen in people with **antisocial** personality disorder, a psychiatric disorder in which the patient has no concern for the emotions or safety of other people and feels no guilt for his or her actions.

There's a big difference between the way Harp used **antisocial** to describe someone who doesn't talk much at a party and the scientific definition of **antisocial** behaviour.

Scowl, scowling

A **scowl** is a facial expression. A **scowl** is similar to a frown, and sometimes the words can be synonyms, but the word **scowl** is usually used to describe an expression that's even more strongly negative than a frown. Someone might frown at you if they're somewhat unhappy about something you said, but people usually only **scowl** if they're very angry or strongly dislike something.

Atmosphere

Harp describes a party pooper as someone who ruins the **atmosphere** when you're having a fun time.

In science, the **atmosphere** is the layer of gases (like oxygen and nitrogen) that covers the surface of the Earth, but obviously that's not what Harp is talking about in this episode!

The **atmosphere** of a place or an event (like a party) depends on the feeling that people have when they are there. A party could have a fun **atmosphere** or a boring **atmosphere**. A restaurant could have a casual **atmosphere** or a formal **atmosphere**.

His/her/their, he/she/they

The traditional rule in English is to use *he* or *she* when talking about one person and *they* when talking about more than one person. But that rule has become a little more complicated over the last few decades.

Sometimes, when you're talking or writing, you may need to refer to a single person whose gender you don't know. For instance, a teacher might want to say, "Any student caught cheating will get a 0% on his or her test." In this example, using *his or her* sounds fine, because the teacher is speaking in a formal manner. But when speaking casually, a lot of people don't like to use *his or her* because it sounds too formal.

Sometimes people will use just *him* or just *her*, but this can be confusing if it makes it seem like you know the gender of the person you're talking about, or if it makes it seem like you're only talking about males or females in particular.

So sometimes, even though it's technically incorrect, people will use the words *them* or *they* to talk about a person in general or a person whose gender you don't know.

Harp does this in today's episode when she talks about a wet blanket in general, who could be a male or a female. Even though she was only talking about one person, she said, "A party pooper is someone who ruins the fun ... When you're having a fun time, they kind of ruin the atmosphere."

Maura did this too, when she said, "You don't normally tell someone they're a party pooper."

A lot of native speakers use *they* or *them* to talk about a single person when they don't want to specify the person's gender, but be careful! Your English teacher or your boss might not like it.

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

1. Which of the following is a synonym for a *wet blanket*?

- a) a party poop
- b) a party pooper
- c) a party poopoo
- d) a party poopy

2. The general feeling that people get from being at a certain event or place is sometimes called its _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) atmosphere
- b) atomsphere
- c) gases
- d) stratosphere

3. Which of the following facial expressions is a person most likely to make when they are very angry or strongly dislike something?

- a) a scowl
- b) a smile
- c) a shawl
- d) a scream

**4. Sarah: Do you think we should invite Scott to the party this weekend?
Carol: We can invite him, but I bet he won't come. He's such a _____ the mud.**

Please fill in the blank.

- a) stick in
- b) sticker in
- c) sticks in
- d) stuck on

5. Where did the idiom *wet blanket* originally come from?

- a) a flood
- b) blanket making
- c) fire fighting
- d) going on a picnic

6. Which of the following sentences uses a metaphor?

- a) He's my best friend.
- b) Her hair is as soft as silk.
- c) You are my sunshine.
- d) You look as pretty as a picture.

7. Which of the following terms does NOT have a meaning that's similar to *party pooper*?

- a) downer
- b) killjoy
- c) socialite
- d) spoilsport

8. Eunice: [*on the phone*] Hey John! Matt and Tina just stopped by to visit. You should come over too and _____ the fun!

Please fill in the blank.

- a) join
- b) join in
- c) join of
- d) both a and b are correct

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