

Catch Word #63 – Over the Hill

Transcript

Robin: Hello everyone. This is Robin.

Jessie: And Jessie.

Robin: And we're back with the Catch Word podcast.

Jessie: At Culips.com.

Robin: C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Jessie: And our Catch Word podcast is where we take a phrase or a couple of phrases, we break them down, talk about how they're used in everyday conversation.

Robin: Absolutely, and check out our website to get a more detailed explanation and a transcript.

Jessie: And you can even sign up to become a member.

Robin: Today's expressions all have to deal with age and how to say that somebody is **old**.

Jessie: Right -- somebody or something.

Robin: Indeed. And what is our first expression?

Jessie: Our first expression today is **over the hill**.

Robin: **Over the hill**.

Jessie: Yeah, so if you say that someone or something is **over the hill** it means that they are **old**.

Robin: Yes, this expression is not really a compliment. You don't usually say that somebody is **over the hill**.

Jessie: Right, it's usually used as a joke or to describe yourself in a joking way.

Robin: Can you give us an example of where we might use it in everyday speech?

- Jessie: OK, so for example when someone has a big birthday, like when they turn 30 or 40, they might complain to their friends and say, "Oh, I'm **over the hill**. I'm so **old** now."
- Robin: When they do say something like that it's going to be done in a very joking sort of way. They're not serious.
- Jessie: Exactly. So someone might say it about themselves or you might say it to **tease** a friend. You might say "Oh you're probably not going to come biking with us now that you're **over the hill**."
- Robin: Mmhmm. Or you're not going to come play football or soccer with us because you're **over the hill**.
- Jessie: Exactly. OK, so this expression comes from the idea of your life as being kind of like a hill. When you're growing up, you're kind of getting better at things, you're going up that hill, you're getting better and better. And then when you're **at your prime**, at your best, you're at the top of the hill. And then as you start to get older, you're **past your prime**, you're not as good at things anymore. You're going down the hill, so you're over the hill. So we mostly use it to talk about age but it can also imply ability. So in baseball, we might say that someone is **over the hill once** they're 30 because they can no longer play as well as they used to. OK, do you want to do a dialogue?
- Robin: Sure, let's do it.
- Jessie: Hey Robin, what're you doing on your vacation?
- Robin: Well, you know, I'm travelling to Kenya with my mom and we're going to climb Mount Kilimanjaro.
- Jessie: Wow, is your mom actually going to be able to do that?
- Robin: Oh, definitely, definitely. She's getting older but she's not **over the hill**. She loves hiking and climbing
- Jessie: Wow, that's great.
- Robin: Mmhmm.
- Jessie: OK, so in that example we were talking about your mom doing a really challenging physical activity, but even though she is older than you are, she's still really capable of doing that, so she's not **over the hill**.

- Robin: She still has the ability to do those things, so she's not **over the hill**.
- Jessie: Right.
- Robin: What's another related expression that we could use?
- Jessie: Well, another expression that we can use to describe someone who's older, who's not young anymore, is to say that they are **no spring chicken**.
- Robin: **No spring chicken.**
- Jessie: Right, **no spring chicken**. So this one comes from the farm because most chickens are born in the springtime, so a spring chicken is very young, because it was just born recently. So to say that someone is **no spring chicken** means that they're the opposite, that they're old. We almost always use this idiom in the negative, to say that someone is **no spring chicken**.
- Robin: So for example, I could say, "Wow, my new French teacher is great, but he's **no spring chicken**. He must be at least 60 or 65 years old.
- Jessie: Right, so you probably wouldn't **say that to your French teacher's face** because he might be **offended**, but it's OK to use in casual conversation, or you could say it to your French teacher if you knew him well and you felt comfortable joking around.
- Robin: So, I guess another expression that's related to these two ones that we've already looked at could be **long in the tooth**.
- Jessie: Yeah, **long in the tooth**.
- Robin: **Long in the tooth** and it means the same thing. It means to be **over the hill** or to be **no spring chicken**.
- Jessie: Right, it's not as common as the other two expressions, but you still hear it **from time to time**. **Once** you're an adult your teeth don't change.
- Robin: Absolutely. So with humans our teeth usually stop growing at a certain age, but with horses it's a little bit different. With horses it seems that throughout their lifetime their teeth continue to grow and grow and grow and grow, so as they get older, their teeth get longer and longer and longer.
- Jessie: Wow, so you could tell how old a horse is by looking at their teeth.

- Robin: Absolutely. So even though human's teeth don't grow, we often say that someone is **long in the tooth** if they're a little bit older.
- Jessie: OK, so because when a horse has long teeth they're old we use that as an expression for humans too, to describe them as well. OK, so as we mentioned the expressions we have discussed so far are kind of a little negative, even though people use them in a joking way it's kind of a bad thing to be **over the hill** or to be **no spring chicken** or **long in the tooth**, but a nicer way to talk about old age is to call it **the golden years**.
- Robin: ***The golden years.***
- Jessie: Yeah.
- Robin: We also say ***the golden age*** as well.
- Jessie: Yeah, ***the golden age*** or ***the golden years***. It's a nice way of saying the senior years or the older age.
- Robin: Shall we give an example?
- Jessie: Cool. I had to work **overtime** again this week.
- Robin: Oh no. That's the third week in a row. You must be exhausted.
- Jessie: I am. I can't wait till I'm in **the golden years**. **Once** I retire, I'm going to relax every day and enjoy my life. OK, so in that example we were using ***the golden years*** as a time to look forward to, a time when you can relax and do what you want.
- Robin: Absolutely, and it's an interesting expression because there was an American show that is named after this expression.
- Jessie: Yeah, that's right. It used to play in the 80s and 90s.
- Robin: And in this show they had 4 older women who were, I guess, in their **golden years** and it was called ***The Golden Girls***.
- Jessie: Yeah. ***The Golden Girls*** because they were in their **golden age** or their **golden years**. Did you used to watch that show?
- Robin: In fact, yes I did.
- Jessie: Yeah, me too.

- Robin: Which is interesting because I think a lot of younger people used to watch this show.
- Jessie: Yeah, I think a lot of people our age have fond memories of ***The Golden Girls***.
- Robin: So shall we recap?
- Jessie: Yeah, we talked about a few different phases today.
- Robin: The first one was ***over the hill***.
- Jessie: Right to be old, to be ***past your prime***.
- Robin: There was also ***no spring chicken***.
- Jessie: Which just means that you're not young, therefore you're old.
- Robin: ***Long in the tooth***.
- Jessie: Which also means that you're old.
- Robin: And ***golden age***.
- Jessie: Right. Which is my favourite because it talks about being older as being a good thing, a positive time in your life.
- Robin: Absolutely. Well, we hope you enjoyed the podcast.
- Jessie: And make sure you check out our Lipservice for more detailed explanations about what we talked about today.
- Robin: See you next time. And for now this has been Robin.
- Jessie: And Jessie.
- Robin: And we're signing off. Take care.
- Jessie: Bye.

Detailed Explanation

Old

It's usually not nice to call someone **old**. Often, between close family and friends, people might joke about it. People might also describe people as **old** when they are not present. For example, Irene could say to her friend Bob, "My Uncle Fred is **old**," if Uncle Fred were not present.

In general, to be polite and in most situations it's best to use one of the polite ways to describe a person who is **old**.

Here are some polite ways to say that someone is **old**:

older than another person
elderly
senior

Over the hill

It's not polite to tell someone they are **over the hill**, although it may be done in a joking way with close family or friends. The expression **over the hill** can often be seen on birthday cards that are shared between family and friends as a joke. This is not something that one person usually tells another in a serious way.

To say that someone is **over the hill** generally refers to the person's age, but it's also related to the person's abilities. As people age they often lose some of their abilities.

In the examples used in this episode, **over the hill** was used to talk about someone who was not there, or to joke about oneself.

Here are a couple of examples using **over the hill** between family and friends:

Patricia: I can't believe I'll be turning 40 tomorrow!

Rob: I know. You're **over the hill** now, just like me.

Ian: I must be **over the hill**. I helped my friends move on the weekend and I'm so tired now.

Brian: Yeah, it's hard to do a lot of physical activity at our age, isn't it?

Tease

To tease someone is to irritate or bother them. Someone can **tease** another person in a joking, playful way or in a way that causes the person to become angry. When Jessie uses **tease** in this episode, she means in a joking, playful way.

Here are a couple of examples with **to tease**:

Jessica: Marc! Stop **teasing** the dog and give him his bone.

Kevin: All right. I'll give it to him.

Steve: Sarah keeps **teasing** me and telling me she has a secret, but she won't tell me what it is.

Cathy: Yeah, she likes when people guess what it is.

In your prime

When someone is **in their prime** or **at their prime** it means that they are in the best physical condition of their life. Someone **in their prime** is generally in great overall condition. People are usually **in their prime** when they are young adults.

After a person is **at their prime**, they age, become older and often less physically fit. At this time we can say that someone is past their prime. So to be past your prime is a synonym for being over the hill.

The word *prime* has a few meanings, but generally has the meaning of something or someone being positive, important, or the best.

Here are a couple expressions with **in your prime** and **at your prime**.

Sheila: I remember when I was **at my prime** and I could bike all day long.

Pauline: You can't do that anymore?

Sheila: I can't only go for a few hours at a time now.

Ned: Remember the good old days when we were **in our prime**?

Mindy: Oh yeah. Now my back always hurts.

Once

Most of us think of the word **once** to mean one time. This is true, but in this episode the word **once** is used in a different way. **Once** can also mean *when* or *as soon as*.

Here are the examples from this episode. You will see that **once** can easily be replaced with *when* or *as soon as*.

Jessie says, "...we might say someone is over the hill **once** they're 30..." She could also have said, "We might say someone is over the hill when they're 30" or "We might say that someone is over the hill as soon as they're 30."

Jessie also says later on, “**Once** you’re an adult your teeth don’t change.” Do you see how you can replace **once** with *when* or *as soon as*?

Here’s another example with **once**:

Henry: **Once** I get my driver’s license I’m going to go on a road trip.

Ken: I’m coming too!

No spring chicken

When we say that someone is **no spring chicken**, it means that they are not young anymore. As Jessie explains in this episode, chickens are often born in the springtime and so they are young in the spring. So a spring chicken is someone who is young, although it is rare to use this idiom in a positive sense.

Here are a couple of examples with **no spring chicken**:

Howard: Doug can’t play hockey like he used to.

Ken: Well, he’s **no spring chicken**.

Mason: Happy Birthday James! We’re **no spring chickens** anymore.

James: Ha! I know!

Say that to someone’s face

To say something to someone’s face means to tell them directly. Often one person tells another person something directly, but when this expression is used, **to say something to someone’s face**, it is to emphasize that something was told directly. We might want to emphasize that someone said something directly to another person because it was rude or dramatic or surprising in some way. In this episode, Jessie uses this expression to emphasize that it could be rude to tell someone that they are no spring chicken **to their face**.

Here is an example:

Jackie: I told my boss that I didn’t like him.

Kyle: You **told him that to his face**?

Jackie: Yep, I didn’t care if he fired me.

This expression can also be used in a dramatic way, like in the example below:

Mel: I heard that you said I’m lazy.

Jean: Oh, well, uh...

Mel: Why don’t you **say that to my face**!

Offended

When someone is **offended** it means that they have found something rude in what was just said or something that just happened. The person who is **offended** feels irritated or upset by what happened.

In this episode, Jessie gives an example where a student would not tell her teacher he was no spring chicken because it is rude, and “because he might be **offended**.” Because it would probably be rude to tell someone that they are no spring chicken, that person might also be **offended**; that person would be bothered or upset by the rude comments.

We can also say *to take offence*, or *to offend*.

Here is another example of someone being **offended**:

Cathy: I was so **offended** by the film I saw last night. They had such stereotypical characters.

Kris: Yeah, I hate it when films do that.

Kevin: He really upset me when he told me that my dinner was not good.

Andrea: I can understand why that would **offend** you. It was really rude!

Long in the tooth

Long in the tooth is another expression that means someone is old, but this expression is less common than the others.

Here are a couple of examples:

Jon: I may be a little **long in the tooth**, but I do know how to use the Internet.

Lennie: Good. So, I'll give you my email address then.

Dale: That musician up there looks like he's falling asleep.

Jorge: He looks a little **long in the tooth**.

From time to time

This time expression is synonymous with *occasionally* and *once in a while*. **From time to time** is another way to say that something happens sometimes but not too often.

Here are a couple of examples with **from time to time**:

Karen: I think about him **from time to time**, but not very often any more.

Donna: Do you like to go swimming?

Pamela: **From time to time** I like to go to the beach, but that's it.

The golden years/The golden age

The golden years and **the golden age** refer to the time in life after a person retires, stops working, and is free to spend their time as they like. The origin and age of these expressions are uncertain. These expressions are positive about the later years in life and all of the free time that one can enjoy.

The golden years and **the golden age** can also be used to talk about the best time for something in history. For example, **the golden age** of cinema in Hollywood is generally said to be between the 1920s and 1950s. This means that at that time Hollywood was doing very well and making some of its best films.

Here is an example with **the golden years**:

Herb: Oh, what a lovely day to be outside enjoying the weather.

Yves: Yes, and while everyone else is at work. Oh, **the golden years**!

Overtime

When people have regular hours that they work at a job and are then needed to work more hours, in addition to their regular hours, this is **overtime**. Working **overtime** is generally not something that people like to do and this is why in this episode Jessie seems sad about having to work **overtime**. The great thing about working **overtime** is that you usually also receive **overtime** pay!

Overtime is most often used as a noun, as in, "I worked **overtime**," and as an adjective, like, "I am looking forward to getting my **overtime** pay."

We also use the word **overtime** when at a sporting event, the game continues after the scheduled time, usually because the scores are the same.

The Golden Girls

As Jessie and Robin talk about briefly in this episode, **The Golden Girls** was a television show running from the mid 1980s until the early 1990s. This show was a sitcom about the lives of 4 older women living in the city of Miami in the US, which is known to be a place where retirees live. (*Retirees* means people who have retired.) The show was quite popular and won many awards. What is most interesting about the show is that people of all ages enjoyed watching it, even children.

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

1. Is it polite to tell someone that they are over the hill?

- a) yes, always
- b) no, never
- c) If someone is a close friend or family member it could be all right.
- d) only if the person is a stranger

2. What does the expression *over the hill* mean?

- a) You're past your prime.
- b) You're no spring chicken.
- c) You're probably in your golden years.
- d) all of the above

3. Walt: You're over the hill now. You can't play.

Ralph: Wow. I am really _____.

- a) excited
- b) offended
- c) happy to hear that
- d) rude

4. Norm: I'm _____ spring chicken.

Christina: Hey, that's not true. You're still young.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) a
- b) no
- c) a big
- d) not

5. What are some nice expressions to talk about the later years in life?

The _____ years or the _____ age

Please fill in the blank.

- a) goose
- b) gory
- c) bronze
- d) golden

6. What is *The Golden Girls*?

- a) A TV show about 4 older women
- b) A movie about Hollywood
- c) A TV show about spring chickens
- d) A song about being retired

7. What does working overtime mean?

- a) working less than your regular hours
- b) working more than your regular hours
- c) not working
- d) going to a sporting event

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