## Catch Word #72 - To blow something out of proportion

## **Transcript**

Harp: Hello everyone! This is Harp.

Maura: And Maura.

Harp: At Culips.

Maura: And if you want to see the transcript for this episode or a more detailed

explanation, you can go to our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com

Harp: Yeah. So today, we're going to do a Catch Word podcast, and that's where

we take an expression and we break it down, we explain it, and we give you

examples. And we give you other related expressions as well.

Maura: Yeah, good. So we always focus on popular English that's being used and

that can help you increase your comprehension.

Harp: Exactly. Maura, what's our first expression today?

Maura: The first expression is *to blow things out of proportion*.

Harp: **To blow things out of proportion**.

Maura: Right. **To blow something out of proportion** means that you take a small

problem, a small situation, and make it bigger or more important than it

actually is.

Harp: OK, so it's not a big problem. It's not a big situation. It's something that is

**small**, but you make it seem bigger or more important.

Maura: Right. This could be because it's very important to one person that they **blow** 

it out of proportion because for them it's really important but for other

people it's not really important.

Harp: Yeah, or maybe they were worrying about it for a long time.

Maura: So, **to blow something out of proportion** is to overreact, to have a really

big reaction to something that most people consider not important.

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Harp: Yeah, to exaggerate your reaction, to act as if a small event is like the end

of the world. That's to blow something out of proportion.

Maura: Right, when you worry about something and think about something and have

a strong emotional reaction to something that most people wouldn't react so

strongly to.

Harp: Exactly. Let's look at some examples with *to blow things out of proportion*.

Maura: Well, one example could be: this friend of mine has been looking for a job

recently and just last week she applied for a job that she really wanted to get

and she didn't get it.

Harp: Oh no.

Maura: And you know, that happens when you're looking for a job. It's normal that

some jobs you don't get accepted to.

Harp: I wish I got all the jobs that I really wanted to, but...

Maura: Right. But my friend really **blew it out of proportion**. She said she'll never

get a job, she started talking about **going back to school** and changing

careers.

Harp: Oh, no. That's really **blowing it out of proportion**.

Maura: Right. Normally you just keep going, you apply to more jobs, and eventually

you find something.

Harp: Exactly. Another example I think of when I think of to blow things out of

**proportion** is I remember when I was young and we had school pictures every year. And this was the picture that was on the wall of you the whole year. And I remember, if I had a **pimple**, every day I would look at that

picture, and think oh god, everyone's looking at my pimple.

Maura: Yup, I know what you mean, but usually that's just your own perspective. You

blow it out of proportion because for you that pimple looks so big, but for

everybody else, they probably don't even see it.

Harp: Exactly.

Maura: Yeah, so like we said, to blow something out of proportion is very

personal; what might be really important to me is not important to Harp.

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Harp: Exactly.

Maura: Now we have another expression, very similar to *to blow things out of* 

proportion.

Harp: The next expression is to make a mountain out of a molehill.

Maura: Yeah. It's a long one. I'll repeat it for you: to make a mountain out of a

molehill.

Harp: Yeah, *to make a mountain out of a molehill*. This is a fun expression.

Maura: Now, first we should say what a molehill is.

Harp: So, a mole is a little animal. It's like a mouse and it digs into the ground and it

makes little bumps.

Maura: Yeah, really, really small bumps, but we call them hills: molehills. So the key

to remember is that a molehill is very, very small.

Harp: And a mountain is very, very big.

Maura: Right. So if you **make a mountain** (very, very big!) **out of a molehill**, it

means that you make something very, very **small** into something very big or

important.

Harp: Exactly.

Maura: So it has really the same meaning as to blow things out of proportion. To

make a mountain out of a molehill means you take a small situation and

you make it really really, big and important.

Harp: So when you **make a mountain out of a molehill**, you're exaggerating the

importance of the situation. It's really just a small problem or a small situation

and you're making it much bigger than it is.

Maura: Right. You react a lot more to that situation than most people normally would.

Harp: Exactly.

Maura: So let's look at another example: **to make a mountain out of a molehill**.

Harp: OK. Let's do a dialogue as an example of making a mountain out of a

molehill.

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Maura: I don't know what to do. My boyfriend hasn't called me today!

Harp: Oh no, is this normal?

Maura: Well, I don't know, I've only been dating him one week, but I haven't talked to

him since last night and it's already lunch.

Harp: I'm sure it's OK.

Maura: I don't know. I feel like things **are over** between us. I feel like he's already

moved on.

Harp: Maybe he's just busy at work.

Maura: But he's not thinking about me!

Harp: I don't think you should make a mountain out of a molehill. I'm sure he's

busy and he'll call you later on today.

Maura: All right. Well, I'm **gonna** wait until tonight and then I'm definitely calling him.

Harp: OK, but don't make a mountain out of a molehill. Just relax. I'm sure it's

OK.

Maura: OK, if that's what you think. So, in that example, I was definitely **making a** 

mountain out of a molehill. A small problem, a boyfriend who hadn't called

recently, and I made it a very serious, dramatic situation.

Harp: Exactly.

Maura: OK, good. Let's do one more example.

Harp: OK, another example that happens in my life all the time is: one of my

coworkers, whenever my boss says anything to her, something small, sometimes not even negative, she thinks she's going to get fired, she thinks she's going to have **to pack her bags** right then and leave. But really, he's just saying something small, like maybe, "Oh, can you fix this paper?" or "Can you work on the project?" She always thinks she's going to get fired. I

don't understand! She makes such a mountain out of a molehill.

Maura: Yeah, that happens I think for a lot of people. They get a comment, especially

a negative comment, and they make it so important and so dramatic, but it

could just be one sentence, one thought, one day, not a big deal.

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Harp: Yeah, exactly.

Maura: And that is our next expression that we want to look at: to make something

a big deal.

Harp: Yeah, to make something a big deal.

Maura: Or you can also say: to make a big deal out of something.

Harp: Yeah, so in the example that I used, when my co-worker gets very stressed

out and thinks that she's going to get fired, she's making a big deal of

**something** that's not a big deal.

Maura: Right, so just like to blow something out of proportion and to make a

mountain out of a molehill, you start with something small, not important, and you make it big. So you make a big deal out of something, when, to

most people, it's small and insignificant.

Harp: Let's do an example.

Maura: So the other night, I was out for dinner with some friends, and we all ordered,

we were waiting for our food, and then when the food came, one of my friends didn't get the right thing. She didn't get what she had ordered. And she got really upset about it and she started yelling at the waiter. It was really

crazy.

Harp: Wow. She made it into a really big deal.

Maura: Yeah, she definitely **made it into a big deal**. It was just a small **mix-up** that

the waiter would have fixed for her, but she got so angry.

Harp: Yeah, if she'd just asked him nicely, I'm sure he would have changed it.

Maura: Yup, for sure. All right, let's go over the expressions that we looked at one

more time.

Harp: OK, so we started with *to blow things out of proportion*.

Maura: Right. And *to make a mountain out of a molehill* was the next expression

we looked at.

Harp: Yeah, and the last expression was **to make something a big deal**, or **to** 

make a big deal out of something.

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Maura: Right. And they're all talking about a problem that's not important, that is

made into a really big problem, especially for one person who sees it like

that.

Harp: Exactly. And you may have heard us using "small" when we mean something

that's not important.

Maura: Yeah, sometimes we even say that something is small and it means not

important.

Harp: Exactly.

Maura: If you want to know more about this episode or any of our episodes, go to

our website, become a member, and check out our Lipservice at our

website...

Harp: Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Maura: Thanks so much for listening. This has been Maura.

Harp: And Harp.

Maura: And we'll talk to you next time.

Harp: Bye everyone!

Maura: Bye!



## **Detailed Explanation**

To blow something out of proportion

**To blow something out of proportion** means to make something that is small or unimportant feel big or very important. Something can be blown out of proportion by one person or many people.

Things can also be literally described as **out of proportion**. For example, you could have a picture that is literally out of proportion. If you have a picture of a person's face, but you make the nose look much bigger and the eyes much smaller, then the picture of the face is **out of proportion**. If something is **out of proportion**, the sizes are not accurate when compared to each other.

Another example could be pants. If one leg is longer than the other, then the legs are **out of proportion** to each other, When we compare one leg to the other, the sizes are not appropriate.

This is just like the expression! When we compare the situation to the reaction, the sizes are not appropriate. The situation is small or unimportant, and the reaction is big, so things are **out of proportion**.

Here are a couple more examples with *to blow something out of proportion*:

Jon: I got so mad the other day when Sally stepped on my foot.

Kevin: Yeah. Why were you so upset?

Jon: I was just in a bad mood. I know that I blew things out of proportion.

In this episode, we mostly use examples with something negative, but the expression can also be used with positive things. Here's an example:

Henry: I got the job! Yes! My life is going to change! Everything is going to be better for me now!

Greg: I think you might be blowing things out of proportion.

And here's an example with to be out of proportion:

Fiona: What do you think of these flowers in this pot?

Paul: The flowers are too small for the pot. They look out of proportion.



#### The end of the world

We also looked at this expression in one of our previous episodes, about air travel. In this case, the expression about **the end of the world** is being used in the positive. If it is positive and something is described as **the end of the world**, it means that it was very dramatic and upsetting.

If we say that someone acted **like it was the end of the world**, it means they acted very dramatically, but that there was no reason to act like that. So when someone acts **like it is the end of the world**, but it isn't a really big problem, then the person can also be said to be **blowing things out of proportion**.

Here are a couple of examples:

Jackie: She acted **like it was the end of the world** when he broke up with her. Nancy: I know! But it really was the best thing for her. She's so much happier now.

Ben: I hate when winter comes. It's so cold.

Carmen: I know. It always feels like it's the end of the world, but really, it's not that bad.

#### To go back to school

**To go back to school** can be used for regular students who are starting a new school year (which usually happens in September in North America). But in this episode **to go back to school** was used to talk about someone who had already finished school, but wanted to go back to school again to take different subjects so she could get a different type of job. More and more people in North America are **going back to school** after they have been away from school for years. People may do this when they're in their 30s, 40s, 50s, or even older.

#### A pimple

Harp worries about her **pimple** in one of the examples in this episode. **A pimple** is a small spot on the skin that is swollen, and often red. Most people worry about **pimples** on the face, but they can appear anywhere on the body.

There are lots of words and slang terms for **pimples**. Some are even describing certain kinds of **pimples**. Here is a short list of synonyms for **pimple**:

Acne
Blemish
Zit
Blackhead
Whitehead
Spot

#### To make a mountain out of a molehill

This expression is just like to blow something out of proportion. To make a mountain (something big) out of a molehill (something small).

Here is another example with this expression:

Herman: Justina is always overreacting. It's so strange.

Peter: I know. She makes mountains out of molehills all the

time.





Here's a little word with lots of different meanings. Some words have more than one meaning, and the meanings are totally unrelated to each other. **Mole** is one of these words.



One meaning of **mole** is the one used in the expression in this episode. **A mole** is a small animal that eats insects and lives under the ground.

**A mole** can also be a small brown spot, like a freckle, that slightly sticks out of the body.

And a third definition of **a mole** is someone who works undercover in one group, and gives information about that one group to their enemy group.

#### To be over

If something is described as **over** it can have the same meaning as finished. In this episode, Maura says in one example, "I feel like things **are over** between us." She means that she feels like things are finished or done, like the relationship between her and her boyfriend is over.

Here are a couple of examples with *to be over* meaning finished:

Jack: I'm so glad the movie's **over**. Germaine: Me too. It was so boring.

Zack: I'm sorry. I have to get going now.

Olivia: Our time together is already over? It went so fast.

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#### Later on

This is an example in English when we add prepositions (like, on, in, out, off, etc.) to words and then they have pretty much the same meaning. To say *later on* or simply *later* doesn't much change the meaning.

Using *later on* means that you are talking about a specific time period. In the example in this episode, Harp means *later on* today, so today is the time period. When using later on someone could mean *later on* today, this evening, this week, this month, or even this year.

So see you later is not exactly the same as see you later on. See you later does not have a specific time period. But if someone says see you later on, it means that you know you will see each other later, probably within the same day. Often people specify what the time period is that they will see each other.

Here a couple of examples with *later on*:

Ariane: Are you going to see the movie?

Shelby: Yeah, I'm planning to see it **later on** this week.

Lisa: I'm going to do some more studying later on, but for now I'm taking a break.

Bob: OK, I'll join you.

**Later** can always replace **later on** without changing the meaning, but **later on** cannot replace **later** when the time period is not specific.

#### Gonna

Native speakers say things like this a lot! In this episode we have a clear example when Maura does not say *going to*, but says, *gonna*. Here is a reminder of more of the words that we blend together in fast, casual English. Remember: these words are not really words and should never be written in a professional or serious way.

Here's the list:

Gonna – going to
Wanna – want to
Hafta – have to
Alotta – a lot of
Gotta – got to (in the sense of have to or must)
Dunno – don't know
Kinda – kind of

#### To pack your bags

Last week we also talked about **to pack**, which means to get all your things together and put them into a bag or suitcase. Of course, to say **to pack your bags** can mean to actually pack your bags. It can also mean that you're leaving a place.

Harp talks about her co-worker in this episode. She says that when her boss says something about work to her co-worker, the co-worker thinks she is going to get fired, and have to leave her job. Harp says that her co-worker thinks she's going to have **to pack her bags**. In this case, she does not mean literally pack her bags, but that her co-worker thinks she is going to have to leave.

Here is an example with *to pack your bags* meaning *to leave*:

Sheila: I had a fight with Jon last night and now he wants to break up. He's acting like he's about to pack his bags.

Brad: You should talk to him right away.

To make a big deal out of something/To make something into a big deal
Here is the last expression that means the same as to blow something out of
proportion and to make a mountain out of a molehill. To make a big deal out of
something or to make something a big deal means that something small or unimportant
is made to be important by one person or people.

Here is another example with this expression:

Jen: She is **making such a big deal out of nothing**. Mandy: I know. She always freaks out when she's scared.

**Big deal** is used in a lot of different expressions. Here's a list of some common expressions with **big deal**:

To make a big deal out of something To make something into a big deal It's no big deal Big deal! What's the big deal? Lipservice



#### A mix-up

A mix-up is when something gets confused with something else. If someone orders one meal in a restaurant and she gets something else, the mistake is a mix-up. If in class you have your friend's book and your friend has yours, that's a mix-up. Or maybe you order a train ticket to Toronto, but when you look at the ticket, the destination is actually Halifax, that is also a mix-up.

Here are a couple of examples with *mix-up*:

Ryder: What the heck? This isn't my jacket.

Coat check personnel: Sorry, there must be a mix-up.

Selena: There must be some kind of **mix-up**. I asked for a single room.

Robert: You should go talk to the people at reception.

Mix up can also be a verb: to mix up.

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

### 1. What is the first expression we discuss in this episode?

- a) to blow something into proportion
- b) to blow something under proportion
- c) to blow something onto proportion
- d) to blow something out of proportion
- 2. Katie acted like it was the end of the world.

#### How does this mean that Katie acted?

- a) She was very dramatic and upset.
- b) She was very happy.
- c) She packed her bags.
- d) She made a cake.
- 3. To make a mountain out of a \_\_\_\_\_\_.

#### Please fill in the blank.

- a) hill
- b) molehill
- c) mouse hill
- d) small mountain

#### 4. What was Harp worried about in her school picture?

- a) bad hair
- b) a pimple
- c) wearing no make up
- d) wearing ugly clothes



## 5. If a relationship is over, what does that mean?

- a) It is finished.
- b) It just started.
- c) It has lasted more than 1 year.
- d) It has lasted one week.
- 6. Addison: OK, bye for now.

Greg: Talk to you later.

Can you replace *later* with *later on* in this example and have the exact same meaning?

- a) yes
- b) no

#### 7. Gonna is slang for which two words?

- a) go no
- b) gone a
- c) going to
- d) going no

## 8. Which of the following is NOT a common expression with deal?

- a. To make something into a big deal
- b. Big deal!
- c. It's no big deal.
- d. It's a small deal.



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