

## Real Talk #018 – Fill 'er up!

### Episode description

Running out of gas is one of the most stressful things that can happen when you're travelling—so it's always best to make sure that your car has a full tank. But what vocabulary and phrases should you use when talking to a gas station attendant? Don't worry, Andrew and Morag are here to explain everything you'll need to know to refuel!

### Fun fact

There's a lot more going on at gas stations than you can see. Did you know that there can be as many as five giant underground tanks storing tens of thousands of gallons of gas at each station? That's a lot of gas!

### Expressions included in the learning materials

- To be on the ball
- To run out of [something]
- To gas up (and related verbs)
- Fill 'er up
- Get 'er done



## Transcript

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Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

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Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hey, Morag.

Morag: Hey, Andrew. How ya doin'?

Andrew: Not too bad. How 'bout yourself?

Morag: Oh, I'm all right. I'm havin' one of those weeks, though.

Andrew: One of those weeks.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Why, what's goin' on?

Morag: Oh, I'm just kinda disorganized, I'm a little all over the place. Like, for example, last night I thought I was really **on the ball**. I got all of the garbage and the recycling together and took it all to the front door, and then I realized that it was the wrong day. So my roommates laughed at me and ... Yeah.

Andrew: So you did all the work for garbage and recycling day, which is honestly one of the most annoying chores to do, I find, is gathering up the garbage and the recycling. You get it ready because they come early in the morning, right? So you have to have it out on the curb by usually 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning.

Morag: Yup.

Andrew: So you gathered in all up, but it wasn't garbage day.

Morag: Nope.

Andrew: Well, the good news is, Morag, you're ready for today when the garbage actually comes, right?

Morag: That is ... That's a good point, yup. You have to look on the bright side.

Andrew: There we go.

Morag: Yeah, and you know, but got some good stuff going for us, 'cause also today we are going to do a Real Talk episode.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: And Real Talk is the series where we take a close look at different situations you need to know how to navigate if you want to live in, or really visit, an English-speaking country.

Andrew: That is right. And just before we kick off this episode, I'm gonna remind everybody that if you're a Culips member, you can use our learning materials to study with this episode. Now, our learning materials include a transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, and examples, plus quizzes. And this is for all our episodes, OK?

Now if you need information about how to sign up and become a Culips member, just visit our website, which is Culips.com. And, of course, we are very grateful and want to give a big shout out to all of our members who are listening now. And thanks a lot, guys. We couldn't do Culips without ya.

Morag: Absolutely. So, OK, Andrew, in this episode we are going to talk about how to refuel your car and how to talk about that in English.

Andrew: Oh, makin' a visit to the gas station. I like it.

Morag: All right!

Andrew: Well, Morag, this is something I guess that everyone needs to do, right? Unless you're like me and you don't really drive very often.

Morag: Yeah, or you know, you have an electric car or you're like me and you don't actually have a car, except for when you rent one. But on vacations, I've always had to refuel the rental car, or on moving day. You always have to refuel the van.

Andrew: Yeah, that is correct. So I guess maybe a better way to phrase it is that getting gas and refueling your vehicle is something that many people need to do, but not everybody.

Morag: It's true. But when you need to do it, you really need to. There is not ... I don't know if there's anything more useless than a car without gas.

Andrew: It's totally true.

- Morag: Ah, anyway. So the plan for today's episode is that we are going to listen to a conversation between a customer who was fueling her car and a gas station service attendant.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, and then after we listen to that conversation, we're gonna break it down and take a look at the must-know expressions and vocabulary.
- Morag: So, let us take a listen to that conversation right now. And we will get to it just after this message.
- Announcer: Do you like listening to Culips? If so, please show your support by leaving Culips a five-star rating and a review on iTunes or Stitcher. This helps new listeners find the show. So don't delay, rate and review today.

Customer: Oh shoot! I'm **running out of gas**. I guess I'd better stop at the station **to gas up**.

Attendant: Good morning.

Customer: Morning.

Attendant: What can I do for ya?

Customer: **Fill 'er up**, please.

Attendant: No problem. Regular?

Customer: Yup.

Attendant: OK, so the total is \$55.00 even.

Customer: Uh, put that on Visa, please.

Attendant: You want your receipt?

Customer: No, I'm good.

Attendant: All right. You're good to go. Have a good day.

- Andrew: We just heard a conversation between a gas station service attendant, so somebody who works at the gas station, and a customer who wants to fill her car up with gas. And so now's the time where we will take a closer look at those key expressions and vocabulary that we heard in the conversation.
- Morag: The first key expression that we came across is **to run out of gas**. So let's listen to that section of the conversation again.

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Customer: Oh shoot! I'm **running out of gas**. Oh shoot! I'm **running out of gas**.

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Andrew: OK, so there we hear the customer kind of realizing that she's **running out of gas** and talking to herself while she's driving in the car, which is something I think a lot of people do. Or if you're like me, you sing in the car. This is the one place that I feel comfortable singing is in the car when I'm by myself.

Morag: Me too, Andrew. Or with other people. I've also ... I don't care. The car is a safe space.

Andrew: Yeah. I don't know, it's actually a really dangerous space but it's OK for singing.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: So this customer is talking to herself and she's like, "Oh shoot! **I'm running out of gas**." And so when we **run out of something**, and in this case gas, it means that we have almost depleted all of the amount of that thing, right? So it means that there's barely any gas left, and if the customer doesn't fill up the car soon, the car will just stop moving. There'll be no gas left.

Morag: Mmhmm, which is not a fun place to be. And you do not want **to run out**. You do not want to totally use up all of the gas in your tank. That's a bad move.

Andrew: That's a really bad move.

Morag: Yes.

Andrew: I use this expression actually a lot, not to **run out of gas** but **to run out of battery** on my phone.

Morag: Ah.

Andrew: You know, I might be texting with my friend, and then I'll say, "Oh! If I disappear suddenly it's because I **ran out of battery**," or "I can't text you right now, I'm **running out of battery**." Something like this.

Morag: For me it's, "Oh shoot! I'm **running outta coffee**."

Andrew: Oh, that's another good one. Yeah, so **to run out** just means to have none of that thing left. Gas, battery, coffee, for example.

Morag: Important stuff, yeah. Although not necessarily.

Andrew: So let's continue on. And the next key expression that we should take a look at is, again, when the customer is talking to herself. She says, "Oh, I'd better stop at the gas station **to gas up, to gas up.**" A phrasal verb, **to gas up**. Let's listen to that part of the conversation again.

Customer: I guess I'd better stop at the station **to gas up**. I guess I'd better stop at the station **to gas up**.

Andrew: All right, so **gas up**. What's it mean, Morag, **to gas up**?

Morag: **To gas up** means to put more gas in your tank, to fill up. Which is another way of saying this, and you can also say **to fill up**. I'm going **to fill up** with gas or I'm going **to gas up**. But **to fill up** your tank with gas, so get more gas.

Andrew: Mmhmm. Yeah, I guess it's because when you put gas in the tank, the level of the gasoline rises. It goes up.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Because English just makes no sense at all, we can't use the opposite. We can't say to gas down, can we?

Morag: No.

Andrew: No, no, no. But **gas up** is totally natural. And you mentioned another couple of good expressions there related to filling up your gas tank, which are **to fill up, to fill up** your tank. You could even say **to refuel**, right? **To refuel** your car.

Morag: Mmhmm. There's another good one, which is ... You'd only say if you aren't totally **run out of gas**. So if you still have some fuel left, you can say that you're going **to top up** on gas, or you're just going **to top up**. And that means adding a little bit more so that you're full.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: Yeah, but you wouldn't use that if you were almost **run out of gas**, you wouldn't say I need **to top up**. It's just if you ... Just if you're kinda like **filling up** the top of the tank. You can use that for things like a coffee cup or something. And I'm on coffee today.

But for, like, a coffee cup, you can say if you're just gonna **top it up**, you're just adding a little bit more so that it's full.

- Andrew: Exactly. And if you go to a breakfast restaurant, for example, the server will often ask you, “Oh, can I **top up** your coffee?” “Can I give you just a little bit of coffee to keep your cup nice and warm and fresh?”
- Morag: Don’t be confused if they say, “Can I **top you up**?”
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: It means add more coffee to you cup. But, “Can I **top ya up**?” Yeah, it doesn’t actually have anything to do with your person.
- Andrew: Exactly, exactly. Another thing that I wanted to quickly talk about, Morag, is what we actually call the liquid that we put in the car to fuel us. We can call it fuel, we can call it gas, which is the most common, gas. You can use the longer word, gasoline.
- Morag: Yes,
- Andrew: But I hear a lot of second-language learners speaking English make the mistake of saying oil, “I need to put oil in my car.”
- Morag: Hmm, that’s not correct.
- Andrew: It’s not ... I mean we do put oil in our car, but it’s for a different use, right? The oil that we put in the car actually goes in the motor. It’s a motor oil and it’s used to lubricate the different parts of the car and keep everything moving smoothly.
- Morag: Being low on oil and low on gas are two different things in the English language.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, so definitely make sure that you’re not confusing those terms, motor oil and gas. And if you’re interested in learning British English, then you’re gonna wanna know the word petrol, because that is what all those crazy people across the pond call gas. They call it petrol.
- Morag: Yeah, you can go to a petrol station, fancy.
- Andrew: Yeah. Oh, it’s so quaint.
- Morag: Yes.
- Andrew: OK, so that being said, let’s continue through our conversation here. And the next expression that I wanted to talk about is when the service attendant asks the customer, “What can I do for you?” “How can I help you today?” And the customer says, “**Fill ’er up, fill ’er up.**” Now this is an interesting grouping of words. **Fill ’er up.** Let’s listen to that part of the conversation one more time and then we’ll talk about it a bit more.

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Customer: **Fill 'er up**, please. **Fill 'er up**, please.

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Andrew: OK, so Morag, **fill 'er up**. I think everybody wants to know, what is 'er in this expression? What does this mean?

Morag: What's going on?

Andrew: What's going on?

Morag: It's a strange one, but you will hear it reasonably often, especially I think in Canada.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Morag: And 'er is actually her, like h-e-r, referring to a female. And I don't know why we say it specifically like this, but it becomes not actually referring to anything ... To a woman or anything like that, but it just becomes a word for it. So ... But you wouldn't say, "Fill her up." It's just always with that dropped h, "**Fill 'er up**," you know? **Get 'er done**.

Andrew: Well, that's another very common expression. For some reason we say, "**Get 'er done, get 'er done**" instead of get ...

Morag: Get it done? Yeah ... What?

Andrew: Yeah, yeah. Now of course you could say, "**Fill it up**" too. That's OK.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: "**Fill it up**," "Get it done," but it is quite common in speaking—not in writing, but in speaking—to say, "**Get 'er done**," "**Fill 'er up**." And, yeah, I'm not exactly sure why either, Morag, but I do know that the tendency to refer to vehicles, not as women, but we use the female pronouns to talk about vehicles. Like, for example, a ship, we could see a ship and we'd say, "Oh, she's a beauty. It's a really nice ship."

Morag: I think that's where it comes from, Andrew. Like ships are female, or ships always have women's names, right? So I think it just sort of happened ... It was a ship thing. It is a ship thing, and then it went to cars afterwards. Although people can ... I've known people who named their cars masculine things, too, so. You can ... Sometimes it will be a joke that you can choose the gender of your vehicle.

So people say like, "Oh, what's your car's name?" And it's like, "Oh, that's Oscar," you know?

Andrew: Right.



- Morag: And then your car is now a man, maybe. But you still ... In these situations, you would not say, "Fill 'im up." You'd still use, "**Fill 'er up**" because the 'er is understood at it, whereas, "Fill 'im up" would sound really weird.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, I agree. Now I wonder if our listeners around the world have this same cultural habit of nicknaming their cars and assigning a gender to their car. 'Cause this is something that most people do. They make a nickname for their car, especially younger people, maybe when they're buying their first car.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: But, yeah, I'm really curious, so if in your culture and your country you nickname your vehicles, send us an email, [contact@culips.com](mailto:contact@culips.com). Or leave us a comment on our website, 'cause I would really be curious to find that out.
- Morag: Yeah, me too.
- Andrew: OK, so moving on, the next expression is when the service attendant asks the customer simply, "Regular? Regular?" All right, so what's going on here, Morag? What does it mean, this question, "Regular?"
- Morag: Well, this question is referring to different grades of gas. So there's usually three, four if you count diesel, which is slightly different. So usually you have ... Regular is going to be the cheapest. And then different gas companies will have different words sometimes, but you'll have regular, I don't know, premium, and super premium.
- And they get more expensive, so what you wanna do is just take a look when you go into a gas station or when you're pulling up to the pump, and just look at what's going on and what things are called. And then you can choose what type of gas you need. 'Cause you know, some cars need the more expensive stuff and some are happy, totally fine, with regular.
- Andrew: As was our customer with regular gas.
- Morag: I think I've only ever bought regular gas.
- Andrew: Yeah. Yeah, I've never bought ... Like you said, they have different names at different types of gas stations, but it's always supreme or supreme plus or ...
- Morag: Yeah, ultra-big supreme, I don't know, it's like ...
- Andrew: Something like that.

- Morag: Yeah, OK. Yeah, I don't know what ... I don't know what's goin' on there, but you know, most of the time, hmm, regular. Yeah, it's good.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. For me it's always regular.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Now in this conversation, we heard a customer speaking with a service attendant. And this type of gas station where you get this service, where you actually talk to somebody, we call this a full-service gas station. And to be honest with you, this is becoming a kind of rare occurrence. I mean you still can find full service, but a lot of gas stations these days are self-service. What does it mean, a self-service gas station?
- Morag: Well, a self-service gas station is one where no one comes to actually pump your gas for you. So self-service, you are doing it yourself. So you have to get out and pump the gas yourself. Depending on the province that you're in in Canada, you'll either be able to pay at the pump or you have to sometimes go inside and pay before you pump your gas. It's that way in BC, for example. You have to go inside and pay first, and then you can add the gas to your car.
- Andrew: Right, they don't want people driving off without paying for the gas.
- Morag: No.
- Andrew: So, yeah, you usually do have to make a prepayment before you can pump the gas. And, Morag, you just mentioned a nice alliterative expression here, pay at the pump.
- Morag: Yeah, yup.
- Andrew: What does it mean if you pay at the pump?
- Morag: Pay at the pump is a term that is on a lot of gas machines, the stations that you actually pump the gas from. And it just means that there is a slot, a way for you to pay with your debit or credit card at the physical pumping station. So the same place where you pump the gas and select your grade of fuel and do all that stuff, will also have a little machine in the top so that you can pay with a card right there. So that is pay at the pump.
- Andrew: Yeah, exactly. So if you're listening to this episode and you're a little bit overwhelmed, you think, "Aghh, I don't feel comfortable. I don't feel confident yet going to a full-service gas station and talking to an attendant," well, don't worry. At least in this specific situation, you can avoid talking to anybody by just going to a self-service station and paying at the pump.

- Morag: Mmhmm. OK, Andrew, well, I think that that brings us to the end of today's episode.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, and we will replay the conversation one more time at the end of this show, so please stay tuned for that.
- Morag: That's right. If you enjoyed today's episode, please support us by becoming a Culips member. This will help you take your English studies to the next level, and will continue to allow us to create more and more great content for you to study with.
- Andrew: If you have any questions or comments for us, you can send us a message through our Facebook page, which is Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast, or visit our website, Culips.com. And, guys, I'm waiting to find out if you nickname your cars in your country. So don't delay, send me a message.
- Morag: Mmhmm, all right. Well, that's it for now. We'll be back soon with another episode.
- Andrew: Bye!
- Morag: Bye.

- Customer: Oh shoot! I'm running out of gas. I guess I'd better stop at the station **to gas up**.
- Attendant: Good morning.
- Customer: Morning.
- Attendant: What can I do for ya?
- Customer: **Fill 'er up**, please.
- Attendant: No problem. Regular?
- Customer: Yup.
- Attendant: OK, so the total is \$55.00 even.
- Customer: Uh, put that on Visa, please.
- Attendant: You want your receipt?
- Customer: No, I'm good.
- Attendant: All right. You're good to go. Have a good day.

## Detailed Explanations

### To be on the ball

**To be on the ball** is an informal idiom that means to be quick to understand and react to a situation. So, someone who is **on the ball** can react and adapt quickly because they are alert, capable, and/or prepared.

In this episode, Morag mentions that she thought she was **on the ball** when she prepared the trash and recycling the night before. In other words, she thought she was aware and reacting quickly to what needed to be done—taking out the trash. Unfortunately for Morag, she was not **on the ball** at all! Because that chore didn't need to be done until the next day, this was actually an example of Morag not **being on the ball**.

Let's look at a better example of someone **being on the ball**. Imagine that someone is riding their bicycle and they get a flat tire—one of their bike tires loses its air. This person doesn't panic, but quickly takes out their phone, finds the nearest bike shop, walks their bike to the bike shop, and fills their tire back up with air. You could say that this person is **on the ball** because they reacted to the situation quickly and capably.

So, when someone is capable, resourceful, and quick to respond to new situations, you can say that they are **on the ball**!

Here are a couple more examples with **to be on the ball**:

Steven:	I have big news! The local paper wants to interview us about our community art project. So ... you're going to do the interview, right?
Jessica:	What? Won't the interview be with both of us?
Steven:	They only want to interview one of us. I think it should be you! You're more <b>on the ball</b> than I am. I trust you to answer whatever questions they might ask and make us sound good!
Jessica:	I guess I am better at thinking and reacting quickly. All right, I'll do it!

Harold:	How was your first day at the new job?
Norah:	It was good! I didn't find anything that difficult. I'm not sure if I'm <b>on the ball</b> or if I didn't fully understand the job.
Harold:	You're a smart and capable person who is quick to understand new information. I'm sure you were just really <b>on the ball</b> !

**To run out of [something]**

**To run out of [something]** is a phrasal verb construction that means to completely use up or exhaust the supply of that thing.

So, in this episode, when the customer says that she's **running out of gas**, she means that she has nearly used up all the gas in her car's tank.

However, gas is not the only thing you can **run out of**! You can use **to run out of** to refer to finishing your supply of anything. For example, when you use the last of your dish soap, you can say that you've **run out of dish soap**. You can even use **to run out of** to describe intangible things, like ideas. For example, if you are trying to think of something to cook for dinner but you can't think of anything, you can say that you've **run out of ideas** for dinner.

So, **to run out of [something]** can be used in any situation where you finish or exhaust supplies or resources.

Here are a couple more examples with **to run out of [something]**:

Francesca:	What do you want to do this afternoon?
Joe:	I wanted to go for a walk, but after that I was thinking of doing some baking. What do you think about having some fresh bread for dinner?
Francesca:	That would be lovely, but I'm pretty sure we've <b>run out of flour</b> . You're going to have to make a trip to the grocery store if you want to make bread.
Joe:	No problem, I can pick up some more flour on my walk.
Francesca:	Perfect!

Helen:	Hey, Greg, do you want to go out for dinner tonight?
Greg:	That's a nice idea, but I'm tired of all the restaurants in our neighborhood.
Helen:	You're right, we're <b>running out of new restaurants</b> to try around here.
Greg:	I guess we could go downtown. We haven't exhausted the supply of new places down there.
Helen:	Good idea!

## To gas up (and related verbs)

One of the key expression from this episode is **to gas up**. As Andrew and Morag explained, **to gas up** means to go to a gas station and refill your car's tank with gas. This phrasal verb is specific to refilling your car with gas and isn't useful in other situations.

However, **to gas up** isn't the only verb you can use to talk about refilling your gas tank. Here are three other verbs that you can use in the place of **to gas up**: **to refuel**, **to fill up**, and **to top up**.

**To refuel**, the only non-phrasal verb in this list, is also the only other verb that is specific to refilling a vehicle with gas. You can, however, talk about **refueling** any type of vehicle that takes gas, such as planes and motorcycles—not just cars.

**To fill up** and **to top up** are more generally useful phrasal verbs. **To fill up** means to make something full, such as a container. For example, if you fill a water bottle, you can say you've **filled it up** with water. You can also use **to top up** to refer to generally making something full, but only if there is already something in the container. For example, if you fill a water bottle that was half empty, you can say you **topped it up**.

So, **to fill up** and **to top up** both mean to fill something, but while you can use **to fill up** to mean filling something that was empty or partially full, you can only use **to top up** to refer to completely filling something that was partially full.

Here are a few more examples with **to refuel**, **to fill up**, and **to top up**:

Ben:	All ready to hit the highway and get our road trip started?
Kate:	Almost! We just have to stop at a gas station <b>to refuel</b> the car on our way out of town.

Mike:	Wow, you bought a ton of groceries! I think the fridge is totally full now.
Stephanie:	You're right, I totally <b>filled up</b> the fridge. There's no more room at all!

Luke:	There's just a little bit of tea left in the pot. Do you want me <b>to top up</b> your cup?
Brenda:	Sure!

## Fill 'er up

Another expression in this episode is **fill 'er up**. This is a slangy, informal way of saying, "Please fill my tank with gas" to a gas station attendant. This phrase would be used in response to a question like, "How much gas would you like?" or "Do you want me to fill the tank?"

However, you can also use this phrase when someone asks if you want another drink, alcoholic or otherwise. For example, if you were at a bar and the bartender asks if you want another drink, you could say, "**Fill 'er up**" instead of, "Yes, I would like another drink." Similarly, if you're at a diner and the waitress asks if you want more coffee, you could say, "**Fill 'er up**" instead of, "Yes, I would like another cup of coffee." In both situations, you're asking for your cup to be refilled, just like asking for your tank of gas to be refilled.

However, don't use this phrase in polite situations, as it is an extremely informal expression.

Here's one more example with **fill 'er up**:

Waitress: Would you like another glass of soda?

Owen: Yeah, **fill 'er up**!

## Get 'er done

**Get 'er done** is another extremely informal expression, like fill 'er up. The main way you'll hear **get 'er done** used is in place of "get it done," meaning to finish something.

Use in this way, **get 'er done** is a piece of advice or to encouragement for someone to finish a task. For example, if your friend was complaining about having to do chores or run errands, you could say, "**Get 'er done**" as a way of encouraging your friend to simply finish their tasks.

However, **get 'er done** is colloquial language from the southern United States, so it's a phrase that you should know but perhaps refrain from using.

Here are a couple more examples with **get 'er done**:

Kyle: Do you want to come to the park and hang out for a while?

Lana: I can't! I have to finish this homework. I have about an hour of work left.

Kyle: Well, then **get 'er done** quickly and we can go enjoy the park!

Lana: OK, OK!

## Quiz

**1. When you run out of something, how much of that thing do you have left?**

- a) none
- b) almost none
- c) a little
- d) a lot

**2. Which of these verbs means ONLY to refill the tank of a vehicle with gas?**

- a) to refuel
- b) to fill up
- c) to top up

**3. What does the 'er in fill 'er up and get 'er done stand for?**

- a) him
- b) her
- c) his
- d) hers

**4. If someone reacts quickly and appropriately to a new situation, you can say they are:**

- a) off their rocker
- b) in the zone
- c) on the ball
- d) off the wall

**5. Which of the following phrasal verbs means to fill something that is already partially full?**

- a) to fill up
- b) to top up



## Quiz Answers

1.a    2.a    3.b    4.c    5.b

### Episode credits

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