

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know your English - April 5, 2015

S. UPENDRAN

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“What are you doing here? Isn’t that important meeting with your boss today?”

“It was! But the cunning man wrong-footed us by having the meeting yesterday.”

“Wrong-footed? Is it okay to say ‘wrong-footed’?”

“Yes, it is. When you wrong-foot someone, you catch the person unawares. You surprise him and catch him off balance. This may ...”

“By doing this, you’re probably putting the person in a very difficult position.”

“A difficult or an embarrassing one. Here’s an example. Be very careful. The person who is interviewing you is known for her ability to wrong-foot her guests.”

“The company was wrong-footed by the sudden fall in the price of gold.”

“Good one! Now then, do you ...”

“Did you take part in the ‘Keep our Beach Clean’ campaign during the weekend?”

“I certainly did. I didn’t expect it to be so tiring, though. My body is still aching! Why weren’t you there? I thought young people ...”

“I helped clean up the beach between six and eight in the morning. See, here’s a picture of me holding the garbage.”

“That’s pretty impressive. You were there, I guess. I stand corrected.”

“Stand corrected? What does it mean?”

“The expression is mostly used in speech. When you say that you ‘stand corrected’, what you mean is that something that you’d said earlier was wrong. You’re ...”

“In other words, you’re willing to admit that you made a mistake!”

“Exactly! Here’s an example. You’re right, Vikas! Australia has won the World Cup five times and not four. I stand corrected.”

“I’ve been insisting all along that you were at Rahul’s party. I stand corrected. It wasn’t you, it was your brother.”

“Well, what do you know! I’ve been maintaining all along that the Academic Council meeting is tomorrow. It is, in fact, next week. I stand corrected.”

“Talking about meetings. Today’s meeting at the club stands cancelled. At least, that’s what the note said.”

“Stands cancelled is an Indianism. Native speakers do not use this expression.”

“Then what do they say? The meeting has been cancelled?”

“That’s right! They don’t use ‘stand’ with ‘cancelled’. The class has been cancelled. And not, the class ‘stands cancelled’”

“I see. Tell me, did your friends help in cleaning up the beach?”

“Some did. But quite a few of my friends thought it was infra dig to pick up trash.”

“Infra dig? Never heard that expression before!”

“It literally means beneath one’s dignity.”

“I see. So, when you say that picking up trash is infra dig, you mean that it is beneath you to do it. It is not appropriate for someone of your status to do it.”

“Very good! There are many men in India who believe it is infra dig to wash dishes.”

“Why only limit it to India? There are men who think doing housework is infra dig.”

“You have a point there. The former superstar thought it was infra dig to be doing such a small role.”

“He should be happy that someone is giving him a role!”

“Middle age is when your broad mind and narrow waist begin to change places.”

— **Joseph Crossman**

upendrankye@gmail.com

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