

## KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

## Know your English – meaning of sophomore

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**What is the meaning of ‘shot in the dark’?***(Navinesan, Tirupattur)*

This American expression is mostly used in informal contexts to mean to take a wild guess.

When we were in school, the teacher sometimes asked a question to which we didn't know the answer. What did we do in such a situation? We tried to guess the answer; we took a shot in the dark.

When you take a shot in the dark, you attempt to do something without really knowing much about it. Just as it is extremely difficult to hit a target when it is dark, one cannot hope to answer a particular question or query when one does not know anything about the subject matter. The best that one can do is guess.

*\* When he asked me how I would solve the problem, I told him. It was nothing more than a shot in the dark.*

*\* There is no negative marking in this test. So, you can afford to take a shot in the dark.*

The expression ‘take a shot’ is frequently used nowadays to mean to give something a try.

**How is the expression coup d'état pronounced?***(Vishal Bhagat, Nashik)*

The first syllable ‘coup’ rhymes with ‘boo’, ‘shoe’ and ‘too’, while the ‘de’ is pronounced like the word ‘day’. The ‘a’ sounds like the ‘ar’ in ‘car’, ‘par’ and ‘far’, and the final ‘t’ is silent.

One way of pronouncing this French expression is ‘koo day TAA’ with the main stress on the final syllable. It literally means ‘stroke of the state’.

The term is normally used to refer to any type of violent revolutionary uprising.

For example, when a democratically elected government is overthrown by the military, it can be called a coup d'état. In everyday contexts, the expression is reduced to ‘coup’.

*\* There was a coup d'état/coup while the Prime Minister was away on a trip.*

The word 'coup' can also be used to mean an expectedly successful achievement.

*\* By getting Aamir Khan to release her book, Dharani pulled off a major coup.*

### **What is the meaning of 'sophomore'?**

*(T Mrinali, Bangalore)*

First, let us deal with the pronunciation of this word. The 'soph' in the first syllable is like the 'sof' in 'soft', and the following 'o' is like the 'a' in 'china'. The final syllable is pronounced like the word 'more'. The word is pronounced 'SOF-e-more' with the stress on the first syllable.

The word is mostly used in American **English** to refer to students who are in their second year of high school or college.

A student who is in the first year is called a 'freshman', and one in the final year is a 'senior'.

'Sophomore' comes from the Latin 'sophism' meaning a clever, but false argument. Students who are in their second year think that they know a lot – although they really don't.

*\* When he became a sophomore, Aditya grew in confidence.*

The word 'sophomoric' is frequently used in everyday contexts to mean behaving like a sophomore – in other words, displaying lack of maturity or behaving in a very silly manner.

*\* If you ask me, Nitesh has a sophomoric sense of humour.*

*\* The arguments Kusum came up with were sophomoric.*

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*"He who breaks a resolution is a weakling; he who makes one is a fool." – FM Knowles*

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