

## KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

# Know Your English: July 11

**S. Upendran**

JULY 10, 2016 17:00 IST

UPDATED: OCTOBER 18, 2016 12:41 IST

**What is the meaning and origin of ‘playing to the gallery’? (Aloysius Edward, Pudukottai)**

This idiom which has a negative connotation has been around for several hundred years. When you accuse someone of ‘playing to the gallery’, you are suggesting that the individual, instead of doing the job assigned to him, is intent on gaining the admiration and support of the people around him. Instead of taking tough decisions, he does and says things which will make him popular – much like our politicians.

*Most news channels are playing to the gallery.*

In the world of theatre, the word ‘gallery’ was used to refer to the people sitting in the cheapest seats. Any actor or playwright who tried to please the poor and unsophisticated people sitting in these seats was seen to be doing something demeaning – by trying to win their approval, he was doing something inappropriate.

**What is the meaning of ‘logophile’? (R Sivakumar, Chennai)**

First let us deal with the pronunciation of the word. The first ‘o’ can be pronounced like the ‘o’ in ‘dog’ and ‘fog’, and the second like the ‘a’ in ‘china’. One way of pronouncing this word is ‘LOG-e-file’ with the stress on the first syllable. The word comes from the Greek ‘logo’ meaning ‘word’ or ‘speech’ and ‘phile’ meaning ‘lover of’. A ‘logophile’ is someone who loves words.

*Our new site will interest the logophiles.*

**What is the difference between ‘chubby’ and ‘fat’? (SK Gupta, Meerut)**

Both words are frequently used to refer to someone who is overweight. Of the two, however, ‘fat’ has a negative connotation. It suggests that the person is physically unappealing. A fat person may be extremely overweight, but he does not like being called ‘fat’ to his face. Nowadays, there is an attempt to soften the blow by labelling him as being ‘horizontally challenged’. The word ‘fat’ can be used with men, women and children. The use of ‘chubby’, on the other hand, is mostly limited to babies and small children who are slightly overweight. Unlike fat children, the chubby ones are usually attractive or pleasant to look at. Babies with chubby cheeks are considered to be cute. The word comes from ‘chub’, the name of a thick-bodied river fish found in Europe.

*There were several chubby children running around.  
Ram's daughter is not fat. She's just chubby.*

### **Is it okay to say, 'I didn't complain because Suchi was there'? (T Narayan Rao, Mysore)**

In terms of grammar, there is nothing wrong with the sentence. Careful users of the language, however, would argue that the sentence is ambiguous; it can be interpreted in two different ways.

It could mean that you did not complain because Suchi was present. Her presence prevented you from complaining. The sentence could also mean that you actually complained – but your complaint had nothing to do with Suchi being there.

You would have complained even if she hadn't been there. Negative sentences with 'because' often cause such confusion.

\* \* \*

*I am in shape. Round is a shape. – Anonymous*

*Email: upendrankye@gmail.com*

Printable version | Apr 20, 2018 7:12:00 PM | <http://www.thehindu.com/books/know-your-english/Know-Your-English-July-11/article14479864.ece>

© The Hindu