

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know Your English - April 11, 2016

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“What happened yesterday? Didn’t you say you would drop in after dinner?”

“I’m sorry about that! I was on my way here when I ran into Jai. Tried talking to him, but he was in a bad mood. So, ...”

“That’s how he’s been for a month now. Jai and his father are heavy smokers, and for the past month they’ve been trying to kick the habit.”

“Kick the bucket? Why is Jai’s father...”

“Not ‘bucket’. Do you know what ‘kick the bucket’ means?”

“Of course! When you say that someone has kicked the bucket, it means he’s dead.”

“That’s right! The expression is mostly used in informal contexts. You shouldn’t use it with a person who has lost someone recently. You shouldn’t walk up to someone and say, ‘I’m sorry to hear that your father kicked the bucket last night.’ That would be awful.”

“So, if I’m talking to you, can I say, my Principal kicked the bucket last week?”

“Yes, you can. Everyone was relieved when the old man finally kicked the bucket.”

“Now tell me, why does Jai’s father want to kick the bucket? What’s his problem?”

“I didn’t say he wanted to kick the bucket. I said he wanted to kick the habit.”

“As far as I know, you can kick people, animals, and objects, not habits.”

“When you say that someone is trying to kick a habit, you mean that he’s trying to give up something he’s become addicted to. He....”

“Like smoking! Jai and his father are trying to quit smoking.”

“That’s right! They want to kick the habit. The expression is usually used with things that are considered bad. For example, smoking, drinking and drugs.”

“People who are hooked on drugs find it very difficult to kick the habit.”

“I know. My cousin has been trying for years, but he’s not been able to kick the habit. This is the second or third time that Jai has tried to kick the habit.”

“Let’s hope he succeeds this time. Do you see Jai at the office every day?”

“No. We work in different departments. We see each other now and again.”

“Now and again? Don’t you mean ‘now and then’?”

“‘Now and then’ is probably heard much more frequently than ‘now and again’. But the two expressions have the same meaning. They both mean occasionally.”

“How about this example? I go to our old school now and again to meet the teachers. “

“That’s rather nice of you. I’m sure the teachers are happy. I go for a jog now and again in the mornings.”

“My cousin Vani who lives in the States calls now and again to find out how our grandmother is doing.”

“You’re lucky! At least your cousins call now and then. My cousins scarcely call.”

“When one is talking about frequency, it’s better to use ‘rarely’ instead of ‘scarcely’.”

“Because my father has diabetes, my mother rarely makes sweets.”

“John is very careful. He rarely drives over the speed limit.”

“Good for him.”

Giving up smoking is the easiest thing in the world. I know because I’ve done it thousands of times.
– Mark Twain

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