

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know your English — February 24, 2015

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FEBRUARY 23, 2015 22:26 IST

UPDATED: FEBRUARY 23, 2015 22:26 IST

“You haven’t been jogging the past couple of days. Are you okay?”

“I’m doing fine. I had a pretty hectic week, so I decided to sleep in at the weekend.”

“Sleep in? You mean sleep, don't you?”

“No, I mean 'sleep in'. When you say that you 'slept in', what you mean is that you got up later than usual. You chose to remain in bed and ...”

“So, ‘sleeping in’ is intentional.”

“That’s right! When I was young, there was no question of sleeping in. My father used to wake us up at 5 o’clock. There was no difference between a week day and a weekend.”

“On the days my mother sleeps in, my father does the cooking.”

“That’s nice of him. Please don’t sit on that chair. There’s a film of dust on it.”

“Film of dust? Is it okay to say ‘film’ of dust?”

“Yes, it is. When you say there is a film of dust on the chair, you mean that there is a thin layer on dust on it. Here’s another example. There was a film of sweat on his forehead.”

“These plates need to be washed again. There is a film of grease on them.”

“That’s a good example. When it gets really cold, a film of ice covers the pond.”

“I’ve never seen that happen. I hear you have a new boss. What’s he like?”

“It’s a ‘she’. Her name’s Vinodhini, and she seems a sensible person. She called for a meeting yesterday and listened patiently to what we had to say. She was ...”

“Do you think she’ll be making a lot of changes? Like your previous boss did?”

“A few changes, maybe. But she’s not going to throw the baby out with the bath water.”

“Throw the baby out? What baby?”

“When you tell someone not to throw the baby out with the bath water, you are cautioning them not to discard the good things with the bad. For example, ...”

“If you wish to improve the manner in which your office functions, don’t change everything. Don’t bring in a set of new rules.”

“Exactly! Don’t discard the ones that have worked well for you. Keep them, and change only those that are causing problems. Our game plan has helped us win six games. Just because we’ve lost the last two doesn’t mean we have to throw the baby out with the bath water.”

“How about this example? I don’t intend to throw the baby out with the bath water. I’ll be retaining the good points from the earlier proposal.”

“Sounds good to me. Have you convinced your father to get you that fancy bicycle?”

“He is against it. He says the city is not safe for cyclists.”

“He is right. Our city is definitely not bikeable. There are too many ...”

“What do you mean by ‘bikeable’?”

“The word is being used nowadays to refer to a place where it is safe to ride bicycles. For example, most cities in India are not bikeable.”

“The colony that my friend lives in is certainly bikeable.”

“He’s a lucky guy!”

“Baby: a loud noise at one end and no sense of responsibility at the other.” – **Ronald Knox**

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Printable version | Apr 24, 2018 8:07:14 AM | <http://www.thehindu.com/books/know-your-english/know-your-english-february-24-2015/article6925984.ece>

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