

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know Your English: Meaning and origin of 'turn a Nelson's eye'

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What is the meaning and origin of 'turn a Nelson's eye'?

(K. Anantha Ramana, Kurnool)

The expression has been around for several hundred years, and it has the same meaning as 'turn a blind eye' to something. When you turn a blind eye to a problem, you choose to deliberately ignore it; you pretend the problem does not exist.

*How can Gautam turn a Nelson's eye to the rampant corruption in his department?

*The Vice-Chancellor turned a Nelson's eye to the drug problem on campus.

The Nelson in the expression refers to Horatio Nelson, the inspirational British naval officer who was blind in one eye. In 1801, at Copenhagen, Nelson led the main attack against a fleet of Dutch and Norwegian ships. During the height of battle, Nelson's superior officer, Admiral Hyde Parker, signalled him to withdraw. When Nelson's men saw the signal, they informed him of it. Nelson then took out his telescope and looked through it using his blind eye. He is believed to have said, "I have only one eye, and I have the right to be blind sometimes. I really do not see the signal." Nelson ordered his men to continue fighting, and a few hours later, after a hard fought battle, he emerged victorious.

What is the difference between 'unsatisfied' and 'dissatisfied'?

(V. Jayakrishnan, Kochi)

'Unsatisfied' is the opposite of 'satisfied'. A person who is unsatisfied about something is less than satisfied because this individual hasn't got enough of the thing he or she wanted. This feeling of unhappiness is usually temporary. A 'dissatisfied' person, on the other hand, is a discontented individual; he feels terribly disappointed or frustrated about a person, thing or situation. This feeling of unhappiness is usually about the lack of something, and it is not always short lived. It is something that constantly weighs on his mind. Though an unsatisfied individual does not get enough of what he wants, he may not actively feel dissatisfied about it.

*In our country, there is an unsatisfied demand for good schools.

*Bhaskar has been dissatisfied with his job for several years now.

What is the meaning of 'per se'?

(R. V. Ganeshan, Chennai)

First, let's deal with the pronunciation of this Latin expression. The first word is pronounced like the word 'per,' and the second, like the word 'say.' It is pronounced 'per-SAY' with the main stress on the second word. 'Per se' means 'of or by itself.' For example, one can say, 'Driving, per se, is not something I really enjoy.' The use of 'per se' in the sentence suggests that you are looking at driving in isolation. You are in no way comparing driving with anything else; you are not considering it in relation to any other thing.

*My boss, per se, isn't an interesting person to talk to. But he has wonderful contacts.

*Uma's job, per se, isn't very interesting, but she manages to make some easy money.

Does the word 'disremember' exist?

(G. Yuktha, Chennai)

Yes, it does. The dictionaries that have listed 'disremember' define it as a word used in informal contexts in American **English** to mean 'to forget' or 'fail to remember.' Some label the word 'U.S dialect'; it is not considered to be a part of Standard English.

*My last vacation was terrible. It's something I would like to disremember.

"Prayer of the modern American: 'Dear God, I pray for patience. And I want it right now!'" – **Oren Arnold**

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