

## KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

# Know Your English: What is the difference between a 'snoopy' and a 'nosey' person?

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What is the difference between a 'snoopy' and a 'nosey' person?

(D. Madhusudhan, Bangalore)

If you like your privacy, both are best avoided! Both pry into other people's affairs, and are keen to know what is happening in their lives. They go to any length to get the information they are looking for. Of the two, 'snoopy' has the more negative connotation. A 'nosey' person is like the gossip; everyone knows who he/she is. The nosey individual doesn't hide the fact that he/she is inquisitive, and is interested in getting the information. If he wants to know something about you, he may even come and ask you directly. 'Snoopy', on the other hand, suggests that the individual is secretive; he never adopts the direct approach. He is sneaky and may use illegal means to get the information he wants.

What is the meaning of 'livelong'?

(S. Anuradha, Trichy)

The first syllable is pronounced like the verb 'live' – 'I live here'. 'Livelong' is considered to be literary, and is seldom heard in everyday conversation. It comes from the German 'lief longe'; the expression was used to refer to a period of time – it could be, for example, an entire day. With the passage of time, 'lief longe' became 'livelong' and underwent a change in meaning. Nowadays, the word is also used to refer a period of time which is both long and tedious. 'Livelong' has the stress on the first syllable.

\*Rajan sat next to Sunita in the hospital lounge all the livelong night.

In **English** films, people keep saying 'My bad'. Is it grammatically correct to say so?

(Mukesh, Nagpur)

In terms of grammar, it is not acceptable. But the expression 'my bad' has been part of American English since the 1970s. It is frequently used in informal contexts to mean 'my mistake' or 'I'm to blame'. It is also used to mean 'I apologize'.

According to one theory, a basketball player named Manute Bol coined the expression. The story goes that whenever Bol made a bad pass to his teammate, he apologised by saying 'my

bad' instead of 'my fault'. Soon his teammates and players from other teams picked up on the expression and began using it.

\*My friends arrived late because of me. My bad.

How is the word 'spiel' pronounced?

(K.V. Sharadha, Chennai)

The 's' sounds like the 'sh' in 'ship' and 'sheep' and the following 'piel' sounds like the word 'peel'. The word is pronounced 'SHPEEL'. It comes from the German 'spielen' meaning 'to play'. In English, a 'spiel' is a prepared talk; one that is intended to lure someone into buying or doing something. This talk is usually lengthy, and as a result rather tedious to listen to. For example, when we walk into a car showroom and ask the salesperson about a particular model, he responds by speaking at length about it. The substance of the 'spiel' is prepared in advance and the salesperson uses it with every customer he interacts with. During the time of elections, a politician gives the same spiel over and over again. The word has a negative connotation. When used as a verb, 'spiel' means 'to reel off'.

\*Jyothi's father gave us the usual spiel about working hard.

\*Hari spieled the names of all the Pulitzer Prize winners.

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*"A lot of fellows nowadays have a B.A., M.D., or a Ph.D. Unfortunately, they don't have a J.O.B."* –  
**'Fats' Domino**

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