

## KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

# Know your English – meaning and origin of wheatish complexion

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**What is the difference between ‘come in’ and ‘come on in’?**

(KP Asha, Sholapur)

In terms of meaning, there is hardly any difference. In both cases, you are asking the person to enter your home, room, etc. ‘Come on in’ is mostly used in informal contexts, and carries with it a sense of warmth and enthusiasm that is absent in ‘come in’. When you ask someone to ‘come on in’, it suggests you are being friendly; in fact, you are encouraging the individual to enter. ‘Come in’, on the other hand, lacks this sense of friendliness; at times, it may sound like an order.

\*Shaheen, what a pleasant surprise! Come on in!

**What is the meaning of ‘wheatish complexion’?**

(Surya, Nellore)

Going through the matrimonial columns, one would get the impression that Indians are extremely fond of wheat – for most people are looking for a partner who has a ‘wheatish’ complexion. Perhaps, what they mean by this is that they are looking for someone who is somewhat light skinned; someone who isn’t very dark. ‘Wheatish’ is an Indianism; native speakers of **English** do not use it. The few dictionaries that include ‘wheatish’ define it as a word used in India to mean ‘light brown’.

**Which is correct: Call me at 2781123 or call me on 2781123?**

(Mallika, Madurai)

If it is a telephone number you have in mind, then both are correct. It is possible to ‘call someone on’ or ‘call someone at’ a particular number. The British prefer to say ‘call me on’, while those on the other side of the Atlantic – the Americans – seem partial to ‘call me at’.

\*If you need any assistance, please call me on/at 99261456789.

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