

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know your English - Teller in ATM

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What is the meaning of 'teller' in Automated Teller Machine (ATM)?

(T.V. Ramesh, Trichy)

It means 'to count'; the machine counts the money before giving it to you. It does the same job as that of the 'bank teller'. The word 'teller' comes from the Old English 'tellan' meaning 'to calculate' or 'count'. Over a period of time, 'tellan' acquired another meaning – to narrate. This gave us the verb 'tell'. With the passage of time, the original meaning ('to count') fell out of use, and the second one ('to narrate') became the principal meaning of the word. 'Teller' meaning 'count' survives in a limited number of terms: bank teller, ATM, etc.

Is it okay to say 'I live in Quarter no: 25'?

(AK Sarma, Bilaspur)

No, it isn't. In India, we generally use the word 'quarters' to refer to the accommodation provided to us by the organisation we are working for. The word is not the plural of 'quarter'. When you want to give someone your address, you have to say 'Quarters number', and not 'Quarter number'.

What is the meaning of 'gubernatorial'?

(M.L. Srujitha, Visakapatnam)

Let's deal with the pronunciation of the word first. The 'u' is like the 'oo' in 'pool', 'cool', and 'fool', and the following 'e' and 'a' are like the 'a' in 'china'. The 'o' in the fourth syllable sounds like the 'au' in 'caught', 'naught', and 'taught'. The word, meaning 'of or relating to governor', is pronounced 'goo-be-ne-TAU-ri-el' with the stress on the fourth syllable. The Indian media are extremely fond of this word. It comes from the Latin 'gubernare' meaning 'to steer or govern'. Gubernatorial is mostly used in American English.

*It is difficult to predict which party will win the gubernatorial elections.

What is the meaning of 'frazzle'?

(G. Dharani, Chennai)

This word which rhymes with 'razzle' and 'dazzle' is mostly used in informal contexts to mean 'completely exhausted' or 'completely burnt'. It can be used both as a noun and an

adjective.

*Shebani had worn herself to a frazzle looking after her ailing father.

*By the time Veda got off the phone, the curry had been burnt to a frazzle.

*Rajesh looked frazzled before the meeting with his boss.

What is the difference between 'country' and 'nation'?

(Mahesh Babu, Ponneri)

Many people tend to use the words interchangeably nowadays. Careful users of the language, however, maintain a distinction between the two. A 'country' is often defined as a self-governing political entity; it is mostly used to refer to the geographical characteristics of a State. A 'nation,' on the other hand, is mostly used when talking about the people. When you talk about a nation, you are referring to the tightly-knit group of people who often share a common culture and history. The word is seldom used to refer to a place. India is a large country, but a poor nation. Since the people living in different parts of South America share a common language, and a common culture, it is possible to talk about the nations of South America. A country may consist of many nations. For example, take the case of the Soviet Union. Before it broke up, it was one big country containing many nations.

“Television has proved that people will look at anything rather than each other.” – Ann Landers

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