

## KNOW YOUR ENGLISH EDUCATION

## A throwback to the good times

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APRIL 09, 2018 12:00 IST

UPDATED: APRIL 07, 2018 14:56 IST

**Which is correct – ‘nook and cranny’ or ‘nook and corner’? (Narayanan, Bengaluru)**

In India, quite a few people tend to say ‘nook and corner’; native speakers of English, however, say ‘every nook and cranny’. Standard dictionaries label ‘nook and corner’ as Indianism. The word ‘nook’ rhymes with ‘book’ and ‘took’ and ‘cranny’ rhymes with ‘granny’ and ‘Danny’. When you say that you have looked for your book or car keys in every nook and cranny, what you are suggesting is that you have looked for it everywhere – even in the most remote place that you could think of. ‘Nook’ is a corner or a secluded spot that is partially hidden, and ‘cranny’ is normally used to refer to an opening or a narrow hole of some kind in a solid object, like a wall or a rock.

*Sheetal looked in every nook and cranny, but she didn't find the treasure.*

*Vimal knows every nook and cranny of the city.*

**What is the meaning of ‘throwback’? (Jaya Daniel, Hyderabad)**

When you say that someone is a ‘throwback’ to an earlier era, what you are suggesting is that everything about him – perhaps his behaviour, beliefs, etc. – reminds you of the way people were a long time ago. Something about the individual makes you think about an earlier period of time. The word can be used with things as well.

*The film is a throwback to the tragedies made in the 1960s and 70s.*

*Jeevan won't do well in IPL. He is a throwback to the batsman of old.*

**Should we include full stops after titles like ‘Mr’ and ‘Dr’? (Anne Dayanandan, Chennai)**

Whether you choose to use a full stop after titles like ‘Mr’, ‘Mrs’ and ‘Ms’ depends on you. It is a matter of style. Among native speakers of English, the Americans tend to use a full stop after the title; the British, on the other hand, do not. If you choose to add the person’s initials, then you can write, ‘Mrs J Rao’ or ‘Mrs. J. Rao’. Which style you choose to adopt is up to you; you need to be consistent in what you do. When it comes to the abbreviated forms for countries – ‘USA’, ‘UK’, etc. – one can choose to either include or leave out the full stop – both ‘USA’ and ‘U.S.A.’ are acceptable. There is a tendency nowadays to omit the full stop.

**How is the word ‘facetious’ pronounced? (B. Nair, Kochi)**

The first vowel and the 'iou' in the final syllable sound like the 'a' in 'china'. The 'ce' is pronounced like the word 'sea', and the following 't' is like the 'sh' in 'ship', 'sheet', and 'shop'. The word, which is mostly used to show disapproval, is pronounced 'fe-SEE-shes' with the stress on the second syllable. It comes from the Latin 'facetus' meaning 'witty'. When you are facetious, you end up annoying a lot of people around you; you achieve this by making silly or inappropriate comments about something serious. While those around you are taking the matter at hand very seriously, you do the exact opposite. The comments that you believe are funny are inappropriate and annoying.

*Bhaskar was fired for making facetious remarks during the meeting.*

*The members of the club are very serious people. Don't be facetious.*

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*Common sense is like deodorant. The people who need it most never use it. – Bill Murray*

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Printable version | Apr 20, 2018 6:00:39 PM | <http://www.thehindu.com/education/a-throwback-to-the-good-times/article23465096.ece>

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