

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

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“In the final scene, we have the heroine running at the villain and punching...”

“Running at the villain? You mean ‘running after’ the villain, don’t you?”

“No, I don’t. When you ‘run after’ someone, you pursue or chase the individual. The policeman ran after the thief, but was unable to catch her.”

“Like many policeman, he was probably out of shape. Here’s my example. The children ran after the cute puppy. Now tell me, what does ‘run at’ mean?”

“When you ‘run after’ someone, you may be pursuing the individual just for the fun of it. When you ‘run at’ someone, you rush towards him in order to attack...”

“In other words, you’re being very serious. You’re not fooling around. You’re charging or moving towards someone in a threatening manner.”

“That’s right! The cornered animal ran at the hunter.”

“The young woman ran at her tormentor and punched him on his nose.”

“When he saw the villagers running at him, he pulled out his gun and fired in the air.”

“They must have stopped immediately. Tell me, what do you think of this new shirt my aunt got me? She and my mother went...?”

“To tell you the truth, I wouldn’t be caught dead wearing it. There’s something...”

“Caught dead wearing it? What does it mean?”

“It means I would never wear a shirt like that. I’d be too embarrassed to...”

“I see! How about this example? I wouldn’t be caught dead shaking hands with a politician.”

“Sounds good. It’s also possible to say ‘seen dead’. I wouldn’t be seen dead in the company of Sujatha and Jai.”

“Even if you paid him, my neighbour wouldn’t be seen dead riding my old bicycle.”

“That sounds a bit like my friend Sameer. He’s always talking about...”

“Your friend Sameer comes from a very wealthy family, doesn’t he?”

“He’d like people to think so. But he was born with a wooden spoon in his mouth. He’s...”

“Is it the opposite of ‘born with a silver spoon in his mouth’?”

“That’s right! When you’re born with a silver spoon in your mouth, you’re born into a wealthy family. Some of my cousins were born with a silver spoon in their mouth.”

“Quite a few students in my class were born with a silver spoon in their mouth.”

“That’s a good example. The expression ‘born with a wooden spoon in his mouth’ is sometimes used to refer to a person who comes from a poor family. His parents...”

“His parents are not well to do. They have to work really hard to make ends meet.”

“That’s right! Jai was born with a wooden spoon in his mouth. He’s had to work really hard to get to where he is today.”

“Most people in my neighbourhood were born with a wooden spoon in their mouth.” “Now tell me, where did your aunt get that shirt?”

“She went for shopping with my mom yesterday, and...”

“You don’t ‘go for shopping’. You ‘go shopping’. I went shopping with my friends.”

“Many people enjoy going shopping.”

“I certainly don’t.”

* * *

We always hold hands. If I let go, she shops. – Henry Youngman

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