

EDUCATION

Don't be a showboat

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“I don't think I can eat the entire slice. I'll cut it into two. Where do you keep your cutleries? In the kitchen or in the...”

“No, it's in the shelf over there. You'll find the cutlery in the bottom drawer.”

“Wow! You have a lot of cutleries. When did you buy this knife?”

“A couple of years ago. By the way, it's cutlery and not cutleries. Everything that you use – the knives, forks, spoons, etc. – is usually referred to as cutlery.”

“My neighbour spends a lot of money on cutlery. Why do you have so much cutlery?”

“Stop asking irritating questions. Did you watch the match yesterday?”

“I watched it with my uncle. Like your father, he's very fond of cricket. But he doesn't ...”

“If he's like my father, he probably doesn't care about the players of today. Does he say there's too much showboating in today's game?”

“Showboating? What does it mean?”

“The annoying way some players behave on the field just to attract the attention of the spectators and the television cameras.”

“You mean showing off on the field?”

“I guess you could say that. The expression is mostly used in the context of sports to show disapproval. The thing I like about Federer and Nadal is that there's no showboating after they win a big event.”

“But when an athlete performs something truly extraordinary, I suppose you could excuse his or her showboating.”

“Most definitely. Someone who indulges in a lot of showboating is called a 'showboat'. For example, some of my cousin's teammates think he's nothing more than a showboat.”

“Is your cousin a good player?”

“He's all right, I guess. I'm told he's a great fielder and...”

“Tell me, is the word 'all right' spelt as one word or two? I've often seen it spelt 'a..l..r..i..g..h..t'. Is it okay to spell it this way?”

“That’s the spelling that many people use – especially, in informal contexts. But in formal styles of writing, ‘a.l.l.r.i.g.h.t’ is still the preferred spelling. It’s safer to spell it as two words instead of one.”

“I must remember to tell Sujatha this. She, as usual, told me...”

“You had lunch with her yesterday, didn’t you? How did it go?”

“As usual, she had nasty things to say – it was about my beard, this time.”

“I think Sujatha likes giving you the needle. She thinks...”

“What are you talking about? She’s never given me any needle. In fact, ...”

“When you ‘give someone the needle’, you irritate or annoy the individual.”

“Really? I suppose you annoy the person by criticising him all the time.”

“That’s one way of giving the person the needle. You can also irritate him by teasing him. It’s also possible to say ‘needle someone.’”

“How about this example? I say silly things just to needle my parents.”

“Most people do that. Prassana’s friends gave him the needle when he came to college wearing an orange shirt and a purple tie.”

“Good grief! What a terrible combination. My grandmother is always needling me about my long hair and beard.”

“I think it’s about time you got a haircut and a shave.”

* * * *

“Cricket needs brightening up a bit. My solution is to let the players drink at the beginning of the game, not after. It always works in our picnic matches.” – Paul Hogan

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