

EDUCATION

Planning to regift this festive season?

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What is the meaning of 'regift'? (RV Jaishankar, Vellore)

We often receive gifts on our birthday that we do not particularly like or care for. Sometimes, two people give us the same gift. What do we do with them? Some people throw these gifts into their cupboards and forget all about them. The smart ones gift them to their friends or members of their family on their birthdays. This act of passing on a gift that you have received to someone else is called 'regifting'. The friend/family member does not realise that you are merely getting rid of a gift that you do not like. The American comedy show, 'Seinfeld', was instrumental in popularising this word. 'Regift' can be used both as a noun and a verb. A person who regifts frequently is called a 'regifter'.

Harish was honest about it. He told me that the pen was a regift.

Anil is planning to regift the ugly painting he got from Mala.

What is the difference between 'tiring' and 'tiresome'? (C Kanchana, Chennai)

When you say that an activity that you performed was rather 'tiring', what you are suggesting is that it made you extremely tired. In other words, it was exhausting; the activity left you rather fatigued. When you say that making conversation with someone is rather 'tiresome', what you are suggesting is that you find it rather boring or annoying. The word has a negative connotation.

I've had a long, tiring day. So, let's not go anywhere this evening.

Watching the same movie every day can become quite tiresome.

Filling out all these application forms is proving to be a tiresome process.

How is the word 'broach' pronounced? (F Vilayil, Ernakulam)

The word rhymes with 'coach' and 'poach'. When you 'broach a subject', you very hesitantly bring it up during a conversation or discussion. You are hesitant because you probably realise that it is a delicate matter; one that could either upset you or the person you are talking to. So, when you 'broach' something, you are introducing something new with a great deal of reluctance.

The student wanted to change her supervisor. But she didn't know how to broach the subject with the Dean.

After dinner, Jaidev broached the subject of marriage with his daughter.

What is the meaning and origin of 'at the helm'? (K Deepthi, Pune)

Drivers make use of the steering wheel to steer a vehicle in a particular direction. In the case of a boat or a ship, it is the 'helm' that functions as a steering wheel. The person who is 'at the helm' is referred to as the 'helmsman'.

Since he determined in which direction the ship would go, the expression 'at the helm' began to be used to refer to a leader or someone who was in charge of something. Why 'at the helm' and not 'at the steering wheel'? People were using boats and ships long before motorcars had been invented.

The company is doomed. The Board has decided that Sashi will be at the helm.

Prema has been requested to be at the helm till she retires in July.

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Christmas is the season when you buy this year's gifts with next year's money. – Unknown

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