

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

## Know your English

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“A lot of my friends buy things online. Do you buy your shoes and clothes online?”

“When it comes to clothes, I still prefer to shop in brick-and-mortar stores. I find it...”

“Brick-and-mortar store? Does it mean a traditional store?”

“That's right! A brick-and-mortar store is one in which business is done inside a building. You can visit the place and decide what you want to buy. Business is not done online.”

“My cousin has several brick-and-mortar stores.”

“That's a good example. Many of the online retailers are giving even the established brick-and-mortar stores a run for their money.”

“I know! Most of my friends visit the brick-and-mortar stores just to window-shop. When they see something they like, they order the item online.”

“That's not fair, is it? I mean...”

“Fair! That reminds me. This morning when I told my cousin that I was fairing out my essay, she had no clue what I meant. She was...”

“My guess is, your cousin doesn't live in India.”

“That's right! She lives in the States. But how did you know?”

“When you tell someone to ‘fair something out’, you're asking them to write the final version of a document – after all the corrections have been carried out. This expression, however, does not exist in native varieties of English.”

“Really? If ‘fair it out’ is Indian, then, what do native speakers of English say?”

“I understand they normally say ‘make a fair copy’ or ‘make a copy’ of something. For example, I asked him to make a fair copy of the report my father had written.”

“After carrying out all the corrections, Jayanth made a fair copy of the contract.”

“Talking about Jayanth, how is he doing? When he was young, he used to get into all kinds of trouble. Do you know if he's managing to keep his nose clean?”

“How am I supposed to know? I certainly don't look under his nose!”

“When you tell someone to ‘keep his nose clean,’ what you’re asking him to do is to stay out of trouble. You’re telling him not to do anything illegal. The expression is mostly used in informal contexts.”

“How about this example? Ever since he’s been released from prison, Kundan has been trying to keep his nose clean.”

“That's a good example. When I joined, my boss told me, ‘Do your job and don’t get involved in office politics. Keep your nose clean.’ I've managed to do that.”

“There are lots of people who find it very difficult to keep their nose clean.”

“That's true. You’d said that you were leaving for Kanpur tomorrow. Have you finished packing?”

“No, not yet. I plan to pack my luggage in the evening.”

“You don’t usually pack your luggage. You can pack your suitcase or your bags. You don’t pack your luggage.”

“I see. It takes a long time for my mother to pack her suitcase.”

“That's a good example. It’s also possible for you to say, ‘It takes a long time for my mother to pack.’”

“I see. My friend finished packing in a matter of minutes.”

“I suggest you do the same. Have a good time in Kanpur. Keep your nose clean.”

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Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm. –  
Winston Churchill

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