

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH EDUCATION

What puts you off?



S. Upendran

JULY 09, 2017 14:00 IST

UPDATED: JULY 10, 2017 12:00 IST

How is the word 'fortuitous' pronounced? (Amudhraj, Chennai)

The first syllable is pronounced like the word 'for', and the following 'tu' rhymes with 'due', 'few' and 'cue'. The 'i' is like the 'i' in 'sit', 'bit' and 'kit', and the final 'ou' is like the 'a' in

'china'. The word, mostly used in formal contexts, is pronounced 'for-TYUU-i-tes' with the stress on the second syllable. It comes from the Latin 'fortuitous' meaning 'happening by chance; accidental'. Nowadays, the word is mostly used to suggest that the happy turn of events that resulted was unplanned. It carries with it the sense of being 'lucky'. 'Fortuitous' is related to the word 'fortune'.

The goal that Veda scored in the dying seconds was a fortuitous one.

What is the difference between 'put someone out' and 'put someone off'? (D Manjula, Pune)

Both expressions have several different meanings. When you 'put someone out', you do/say something to annoy or upset a person. The expression is also used in everyday contexts to mean to inconvenience oneself or someone else.

Sonba felt put out when his friends went to the cinema without him.

Padma put herself out in order to make sure her friend was comfortable.

If you are 'put off by someone's singing', you are repelled by it; you hate the way the person sings. The expression 'put someone off' is frequently used in informal contexts to mean to dislike something. It can also be used to mean to delay or postpone meeting someone.

Chethan has a tendency to put off people with his loud voice.

I had to put off the broker again. He's really keen on showing us the model flat.

What is the meaning and origin of 'fall for something hook, line, and sinker'? (Anuvarudheen, Pallakad)

The expression comes from the world of fishing. The 'line' in the expression refers to the 'cord' or 'fishing line' that a person uses to catch fish. The 'hook' is what the bait (usually a worm) is tied to before the line is dropped into the ocean or river. To ensure that the line with the bait does not merely float on the surface of the water, a sinker (usually a lead weight) is attached. The sinker drags the line and the hook into the water. A hungry fish that swallows the bait 'hook, line and sinker' swallows everything. Therefore, when you say that someone fell for your story hook, line, and sinker, what you are suggesting is that he believed you completely; the person was very gullible. The idiom is mostly used with people who are naive; someone who is willing to believe anything others tell him no matter, how crazy it sounds.

You're crazy to expect people to fall for that story hook, line, and sinker.

The teacher bought the student's excuse hook, line, and sinker.

Is it okay to say, 'Needless to say that Shyam was delighted to see his friend'? (R Jyothi, Hyderabad)

No, it is not. The expression 'needless to say' is not usually followed by 'that'.

Needless to say, Shyam was delighted to see his friend.

Needless to say, my father wasn't very happy with my marks.

* * * *

Guests, like fish, begin to smell after three days. – Benjamin Franklin

The author teaches at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad
upendrankye@gmail.com

Printable version | Apr 20, 2018 6:07:14 PM | <http://www.thehindu.com/education/what-puts-you-off/article19239848.ece>

© The Hindu