

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know Your English: July 18

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“Is it true the word ‘anticlockwise’ doesn’t exist? That it’s an Indianism?”

“Who told you that it doesn’t? Was it...”

“It doesn’t matter who told me. Can you just answer the question, please?”

“When you tell someone that you want something turned anticlockwise, what you...”

“It means to move or turn something in the opposite direction... I mean the opposite direction to the way in which the hands of a clock or watch move.

“That’s right! If you want to break open the seal, you need to twist the top anticlockwise.”

“There was something wrong with the controls. I turned the knob in the anticlockwise direction, but the volume kept increasing. Now tell me, is it wrong to say anticlockwise? I was chatting with my cousin in the States, and he said the word doesn’t exist.”

“It doesn’t in American English. ‘Anticlockwise’ is mostly used in British English. Americans prefer to say ‘counterclockwise’. They both mean the same thing.”

“I see. How about this example? The children found it difficult to move counterclockwise in a circle.”

“Sounds fine. Some people hyphenate these words. Many people, however, don’t.”

“That’s good to know. I see from all the posters in the room that you’re getting ready to participate in this weekend’s protest march. Is your friend Pritham joining you?”

“Pritham has become more of a slacktivist these days. She’s...”

“Slacktivist? I’ve never come across that word before. What does...”

“A slacktivist is like an activist. He too supports a political or social cause. But unlike an activist, a slacktivist is lazy. He’s a slacker.”

“A slacker? Does it mean someone who is lazy?”

“That’s right! He is someone who avoids both work and responsibilities. He...”

“Can I say our government offices are full of slackers?”

“I think a lot of people would agree with you. All the slackers in our office were demoted.”

“That’s good to know. Now, tell me what a slacktivist does.”

“He doesn’t participate in all the rallies and meetings. He doesn’t even step out of his house.”

“Then how does a slacktivist show support?”

“Through the Internet! He signs online petitions. He promotes a cause by posting articles written by other people on his social networking sites.”

“Well, in that case, quite a few of my friends and cousins are slacktivists.”

“Another term for such people is ‘armchair activists’. When Usha says that she’s going to support something, she actually does it. She’s not an armchair activist.”

“When do you think Pritham will become like Usha? When will she stop being a slacktivist?”

“Who knows? Maybe when she feels like her old self again. Or when she...”

“Old self? What are you talking about? Pritham is very young. She...”

“The expression has nothing to do with age. When you say that you’re feeling like your old self again, what you’re suggesting is that you’re feeling like your former self. The way you were before. After the surgery, I feel like my old self again. I don’t feel tired anymore.”

“So, can I say, he’s not been his old self since the accident?”

“You certainly can.”

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Academia would be a meeting of the minds, if you didn’t mind all the meetings. – Jorge Cham

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