

## KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

# Know your English – What is the difference between 'prognosis' and diagnosis'?

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What is the difference between 'prognosis' and diagnosis'?

(Sarah Jose, Bangalore)

When you go to a doctor with a problem, he listens to what you have to say, does a few standard tests, and arrives at a conclusion as to what is wrong with you. The identification of the cause of your problem is called 'diagnosis'. If you refuse treatment, the doctor may choose to inform you how the illness will affect you in the days to come, and the complications it may lead to. This statement that the doctor makes about the likely course of your medical condition is the 'prognosis'.

\*The doctor was unable to diagnose why the patient's BP was dropping.

\*The surgeon took the parents aside and gave them the gloomy prognosis.

The first syllable of 'prognosis' rhymes with 'frog', while the second is pronounced like the word 'know'. The final syllable sounds like the word 'sis'. The word is pronounced 'prog-KNOW-sis' with the stress on the second syllable.

What is the meaning of 'plough a lonely furrow'?

(P. P. Salam, Doha)

In order to plant seeds, a farmer makes use of a plough to dig up his field. The deep line that the plough makes as it is dragged is called a 'furrow'. The 'u' in the first syllable is like the 'u' in 'cut' and 'but', and the second syllable sounds like the word 'row'. The word is pronounced 'FU-row' with the stress on the first syllable. An individual who 'ploughs a lonely furrow' is someone who does things on his own; he has no help from others.

\*Leave Bhalla out. He prefers to plough a lonely furrow.

Can the word 'bus' be used as a verb?

(Cynthia, Bangalore)

Yes, it can. When you 'bus' people somewhere, you take them to their destination in a bus.

## THE HINDU

\*For the protest, lots of people were bussed in from the districts.

In American **English**, 'bus' has an additional meaning. Removing the dirty plates and dishes from tables in a restaurant is known as bussing. The person who does this job is called a 'busboy' or 'busser'.

How is the word 'pernickety' pronounced?

(G. Selva Arasi, Madurai)

The 'e' in the first syllable sounds like the 'a' in 'china' and the following 'r' is silent. The second syllable is pronounced like the word 'nick', and the final 'ety' sounds like the 'etty' in 'pretty' and 'Betty'. This word of Scottish origin is pronounced 'pe-NICK-e-ti' with the stress on the second syllable. The word is mostly used in British English in informal contexts to show disapproval. It means to focus on trivial or unimportant details. In American English, the word is spelt 'persnickety'.

\*Bala is pernickety when it comes to punctuation and formatting.

\*Roshni is persnickety about what she eats.

What is the meaning of 'dial down'?

(Jayasudha, Chennai)

The 'dial' in the expression refers to the dial or 'knob' of a radio that controls the volume. When we 'dial down' something, we reduce or lower its intensity. Nowadays, the expression is mostly used to talk about one's emotions.

\*Vijaya needs to dial down her anger.

\*If you want me to listen to you, stop swearing. Dial down your language.

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*"Rich fatty foods are like destiny: they too shape our ends."* — **Unknown**

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