

## KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

# Know your English

**S. UPENDRAN**

APRIL 01, 2013 21:52 IST

UPDATED: APRIL 01, 2013 21:52 IST

**What is the meaning of 'clean chit'?**

(Prashant Kumar, Buxar)

Whenever a politician is accused of some wrongdoing, a committee is usually set up to look into the matter. After a lengthy process, the individual accused of taking a bribe or favouring some member of the family, is given a 'clean chit'. In India, the expression is used to mean 'cleared of any wrongdoing'. Native speakers of **English** prefer to use 'clean sheet', instead.

A person who has a 'clean sheet' at the workplace has an impeccable track record. No one can point a finger at him and accuse him of any wrongdoing. The term is also used in sports.

**How is the word 'limousine' pronounced?**

(Suresh Kumar, Coimbatore)

The first syllable rhymes with 'dim', 'rim' and 'him', while the 'ou' in the second sounds like the 'a' in 'china'. The 's' is pronounced like the 'z' in 'zoo' and 'zip', and the final 'ine' rhymes with 'dean', 'mean' and 'teen'. The word is pronounced 'LI-me-ziin' with the stress on the first syllable. It is also possible to put the stress on the final syllable.

\*We are taking a limousine to the airport.

A limousine is a rather large, expensive car usually driven by a chauffeur. In this car, the driver and passengers are kept separated by means of a screen. In American English, 'limousine' is also used to refer to a van or bus that picks up passengers at the airport and drops them off at various places in the city. The word comes from 'Limousin', a province in Central France. The car was given the name because it resembled the hood worn by the people in the region.

**What is the meaning and origin of the expression 'put one's neck on the line'?**

(R Srinivasan, Srirangam)

This idiom, which is mostly used in informal contexts, means to put oneself in danger. When you put your neck on the line, you are taking a big risk for the sake of someone else. You do this knowing full well that you may not succeed. Other expressions that have more

or less the same meaning are ‘put one’s head/neck on the chopping block’ and ‘put one’s life on the line’.

\*I don’t want to put my neck on the line by hiring a greenhorn like Brijesh.

No one is really sure about the origin of the idiom. Many people believe it refers to the beheading of prisoners – using a guillotine or an axe. Some others believe it comes from the manner in which chickens are slaughtered – the birds are forced to stick their necks out on the chopping block, and then beheaded.

### **What is the difference between ‘takeaway’ and ‘takeout’?**

(Uday Shankar, Chennai)

A ‘takeaway’ is the meal or dish that you buy in a restaurant or a shop that you end up eating at home or somewhere else. The British call this readymade food ‘takeaway’, while the Americans call it ‘takeout’. We in India have a name for it too; we call it ‘parcel’.

Takeaways don’t necessarily have to be fast food.

\*People living in cities have become very dependent on takeaways.

\*\*\*\*\*

*“Generation gap: The one war in which everyone changes sides.” – Cyril Connolly*

*upendrankye@gmail.com*

Printable version | Apr 19, 2018 11:16:21 PM | <http://www.thehindu.com/books/know-your-english/know-your-english/article4570483.ece>

© The Hindu