

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know your English - What is the difference between 'celibate' and 'bachelor'?

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FEBRUARY 11, 2013 23:24 IST

UPDATED: MARCH 12, 2013 14:26 IST

What is the difference between 'celibate' and 'bachelor'?

(Madan Raj, Chennai)

First, let us deal with the pronunciation of 'celibate'. The first syllable is pronounced like the word 'sell', and the following 'l' sounds like the 'l' in 'bit', 'kit' and 'pit'. The 'a' is like the 'a' in 'china', and the final 'e' is silent. The word is pronounced 'SEL-i-bet' with the stress on the first syllable. It comes from the Latin 'caelibatus' meaning 'unmarried state'. A man or a woman who chooses to remain single, usually for religious reasons, is called a celibate. This individual takes a vow to remain single and abstain from sex. The word 'bachelor', on the other hand, is always used to refer to a man who is single. In this case, being unmarried may not always be a matter of choice.

There are men who want to get married, but are unable to find the right girl. Unlike a celibate, a bachelor need not abstain from sex. The word comes from the French 'bachelor'; originally, the term was used to refer to a young man training to be a knight. A woman who is single is called a 'bachelorette'.

What is the meaning of 'nomophobia'?

(I Murtuza, Melvisharam)

There was a time when people's greatest fear was standing in front of an audience and making a speech. How things have changed! The present generation's greatest fear or phobia is being without a mobile phone! 'Nomophobia' is the short form of 'no mobile phone phobia'. A 'nomophobe' spends sleepless nights worrying about the following things: that the phone battery will die soon, that he will somehow lose his cell phone, that any moment now, he will be out of cell phone range, etc. The term 'nomophobia' was coined in the UK.

What is the meaning and origin of 'to pit against'?

(Sneha, Hyderabad)

The expression is quite frequently heard in the context of sports. When you pit yourself against someone, you compete or fight against the individual. The fight may have been

thrust on you or it could be something that you take part in voluntarily. In either case, you do your best to win. It is also possible for someone to pit himself against something.

*In the semi-final, a tired Federer was pitted against Murray.

The expression comes from the cruel world of cockfighting. The 'pit' refers to the relatively small enclosure where the two birds fought. The spectators, who often bet on which bird would win, formed a circle around the 'pit' and watched the action as it unfolded. Very often, the fight continued till a bird died. When the airplane was invented, the place where the pilot sat began to be called a cockpit – this was because all the action took place in this part of the plane.

Is there a term to describe a wedding where two gay people get married?

(J. Anita, Trichy)

The terms currently being used by the various media are 'same sex marriage', 'gay marriage' and 'equal marriage'. Other terms that are being suggested, but which haven't really caught on, are 'garriage' (combination of 'gay' and 'marriage') and 'sarrriage' (same sex marriage). 'Engayed' is the word suggested to refer the engagement ceremony.

"A bachelor is a man who never made the same mistake once." – **Phyllis Diller**

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Printable version | Apr 20, 2018 4:06:39 PM | <http://www.thehindu.com/books/know-your-english/know-your-english-what-is-the-difference-between-celibate-and-bachelor/article4404851.ece>

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