

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know your English

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What is the meaning and origin of ‘jump on the bandwagon’?

(S. Narayanan, Chennai)

When you ‘jump/climb/hop on the bandwagon’, you give support to a cause or a movement that is gaining in popularity by the day. For example, ever since December, politicians across party lines have jumped on the bandwagon in support of tougher laws against rape. Someone who climbs on a bandwagon may not necessarily believe in the movement or the cause; he is supporting it because it is the right or fashionable thing to do. He is jumping on the bandwagon because those around him are doing so. The person is being opportunistic; he is probably joining the movement for some personal gain.

The company refused to jump on the ‘buy one get one free’ bandwagon.

The term ‘bandwagon’ in the expression was coined in the United States in the 19th century, and it was originally used to refer to a horse-drawn carriage carrying a band. It was common practice for the owner of a circus to send a colourfully decorated wagon into a town to attract the attention of the public. The expression began to be used in politics in the mid-19th century. During political campaigns, aspiring politicians and well-known public figures often showed their support for a candidate by climbing the bandwagon he was campaigning in.

How is the word ‘mischievous’ pronounced?

(Santosh Kumar, Noida)

The word consists of only three syllables, and not four. The first syllable is pronounced like the word ‘miss’; the following ‘ch’ sounds like the ‘ch’ in ‘chips’ and ‘cheat’. The ‘ie’ in the second syllable is like the ‘i’ in ‘fit’, ‘bit’ and ‘kit’, while the ‘ou’ in the third sounds like the ‘a’ in ‘china’. The word is pronounced ‘MISS-chi-ves’ with the stress on the first syllable. A ‘mischievous person’ is someone who has fun causing trouble; he usually finds playful and harmless ways of doing this. A ‘mischievous remark’ on the other hand, is one that is intended to cause serious damage or trouble.

*There was a mischievous grin on Chethan’s face when he answered the question.

THE HINDU

Is there a difference in meaning between ‘Thank you very much’ and ‘Thank you very much indeed’?

(G. Lalitha, Mysore)

Yes, there is. When you say ‘thank you very much indeed’, you are making it clear to the listener that you are genuinely thankful or grateful for what he has done. It is a thank you that is said with real intent or feeling – something that may be lacking in ‘thank you very much’. For example, when someone gives you a gift, you automatically say ‘thank you very much’ even if you don’t like the present. This is because you wish to be polite. The word ‘indeed’ is added to emphasise or strengthen ‘very’. In other words, you are saying ‘thank you very, very, very much’. This use of ‘indeed’ is common in both written and spoken varieties of **English**.

*Jayant’s wife is very beautiful indeed.

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