

## KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

## Know your English - meaning of parlance

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**Which is correct: 'None of them have/has'?**

(R.K. Jagadeesh, Mysore)

Both are acceptable. The word 'none' comes from the Old English 'nan' meaning 'not one'. There was a time when careful users of the language argued that since 'none' is singular, it should be followed by a singular verb and a singular pronoun. "None of the children was allowed to enter his room." Nowadays, of course, one can use either a singular or a plural verb: "None of the children were/was allowed to enter their/his room." When 'none' is preceded by 'almost', then a plural verb is preferred. "Almost none of the Ministers were present at the meeting."

**What is the meaning of 'parlance'?**

(Kumaraguru, Udumalpet)

First, let's deal with the pronunciation of the word. The first syllable sounds like the word 'par' and the 'a' in the second syllable sounds like the 'a' in 'china'. The word is pronounced 'PAA-lens' with the stress on the first syllable. It comes from the French 'parler' meaning 'speak'. Like the word 'jargon', 'parlance' refers to the type of language that people belonging to a particular profession use in their conversation. It can also be used to refer to the style of speaking that certain sections of a community choose to adopt.

\*Please, no legal parlance. Tell us in a language we'll understand.

**What is the origin of 'birdie' in golf?**

(B. Kamesh, Pune)

In golf, a player is allowed a certain number of strokes to sink the ball into the hole. This fixed number for each hole is called 'par'. If the individual takes one shot less than the prescribed number to tap the ball into the hole, then he is said to have made a 'birdie'. The word comes from the Old English 'brid' meaning 'bird'. With the passage of time, 'brid' became bird, and like many words acquired an additional meaning. It began to mean 'excellent'; soon the word was used to refer to things and people of excellence. Since a golfer achieved something amazing by tapping the ball into the hole one stroke under par, this

excellent achievement began to be called 'birdie'. Later, 'bird' became synonymous with 'guy' and 'fellow'. This meaning survives even today.

### **What is the difference between 'luxurious' and 'luxuriant'?**

(P. Mahalinga Bhat, Kasargod)

Although both words are derived from the Latin 'luxus', they have, over a period of time, acquired slightly different meanings. Luxurious is related to the word 'luxury'; it means 'characterised by wealth and comfort'. The word can also be used to mean 'giving great pleasure'.

\*They spent their vacation in a luxurious hotel near the beach.

\*Jai sighed, stretching luxuriously in the bathtub.

'Luxuriant', on the other hand, means 'abundant growth'. It is mostly used with reference to vegetation and an individual's hair.

\*Sneha's luxuriant hair was the envy of her friends.

The word can be used figuratively to mean 'fertile'.

\*Some of the students have a luxuriant imagination.

### **What do you call someone who plays the flute?**

(C. S. Madhusudhan, Chennai)

The most common word to refer to this individual is 'flutist'. Some people use the word 'flautist'. The 'au' sounds like the 'au' in 'caught', 'naught', and 'taught'. In both cases, the stress is on the first syllable.

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"The nice thing about being a celebrity is that if you bore people they think it's their fault."

— Henry Kissinger

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