

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know your English: How is the word 'seismic' pronounced?

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What is the difference between 'no doubt' and 'without doubt'?

(J. Leena, Mysore)

Both 'no doubt' and 'without (a) doubt' are expressions used in sentences to emphasise a speaker's opinion about something or someone. The sentence "No doubt/Without (a) doubt, our team is a good one", suggests you very strongly believe that your team is very good indeed. As far as you are concerned, there is no question about it; it is indisputable. In some contexts, however, the use of 'no doubt' suggests that there is less degree of certainty. "Govinda is, without doubt, an idiot." "Govinda is no doubt an idiot." The second sentence suggests that there is a high probability the person is an idiot, but you are not absolutely certain.

*Mihika, no doubt/without (a) doubt, is the most beautiful girl I have seen.

Is it okay to say, "The Prime Minister will take a call on the matter"?

(C.Teja, Chennai)

The expression 'take a call on' is frequently used in both formal and informal contexts in India to mean 'to take a decision on'.

The Government will be taking a call on raising the price of petrol next week. We'll take a call on the matter after consulting the party leader.

This expression is not found in native varieties of **English**. Native speakers tend to say 'make a call' and not 'take a call on'. "It is the Prime Minister who has to make the call." In native varieties of English, 'take a call' means to answer the telephone: "I'm sorry, I have to take this call." Actors usually 'take a call' after the completion of a play: they assemble on stage and take a bow, acknowledging the applause of the audience.

What is the meaning and origin of 'put out to pasture'?

(S. Anitha, Vellore)

When you put a person or an animal out to pasture, you retire the individual/thing. In your opinion, the person has become a little too old to work and therefore compel him to quit

his job. Another idiom that has the same meaning is 'put out to grass'.

*The Manager will be put out to pasture/grass next year.

*Thirty people will be put out to pasture by the end of this month.

In the past, when farm animals like cows, bulls and horses had outlived their usefulness – when they had become too old to work – they were allowed to walk around and graze on their own. No one really took care of these animals.

How is the word 'seismic' pronounced?

(Prakash Kashyap, Kalpakkam)

The first syllable 'seis' is pronounced like the word 'size'. The word is pronounced 'SIZE-mic' with the stress on the first syllable. It comes from the Greek 'seismos' meaning 'earthquake'. In English, the word has a figurative meaning as well. In everyday contexts, 'seismic' is used to refer to something that causes a great deal of damage or upheaval.

*The arrest of the superstar set off seismic waves in Bollywood.

*This region has been experiencing seismic activity for a few days now.

"Playing polo is like trying to play golf during an earthquake." – **Sylvester Stallone**

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