

# EDITORIAL WORDS

LEARNING ENGLISH & IMPROVING VOCABULARY

## PHRASE OF THE DAY (01-31MAY21)

1. **raise one's eyebrows** (phrase) - to show that you are feeling surprised (or) to show your disapproval.  
**E.g.** One in eight Britons claim to be vegetarian or vegan and another one in five **flexitarian**, eating meat-free sometimes; and although meat consumption rose over the last decade the big rise was in chicken, not red meat. Going veggie for the sake of the planet, rather than the animals, might have sounded eccentric (strange) a generation ago but it barely **raises a millennial (Gen Y born 1981-1996) eyebrow** now.
2. **leave someone to their own devices** (phrase) - to leave someone to do what he/she wants to do (without being monitored/supervised).  
**E.g.** Since public health services cannot deal with the catastrophe, citizens have been **left to their devices** to, literally, survive. When they seek each other's help to care for the sick in their families, the vigilantes who now **prowl** our virtual and physical streets, threaten violence as they defend the reputation of their political heroes.
3. **strike a chord** (phrase) – cause someone to remember something related to him/her in a certain way; arouse an emotional feeling to something (either positively or negatively).  
**E.g.** The ruling party's (Trinamool Congress) slogans of *Joy Bangla* (Hail Bengal) and *Bangla Nijjer Mekei Chai* (Bengal wants its own daughter) **struck a chord** with people against the BJP's claim of providing "*Asal Paribartan*" (real change).
4. **paint a (bleak/rosy) picture of** (phrase) – to describe something in a specific (unpromising/promising) way; tell, narrate, outline, depict.  
**E.g.** The statistics behind the report **paint a bleak racialised picture**: by June last year, 26% of fixed-penalty notices for alleged breaches of lockdown in London had gone to Black people, even though they make up only 12% of the capital's population.
5. **few and far between** (phrase) – rare, infrequent, occasional, sporadic; scarce, meagre, insufficient.  
**E.g.** The Australian government's drastic decision to temporarily stop all travellers from India entering Australia has me in tears almost every night, struggling to cope with the uncertainty of when I'll see my husband again. Before he departed Australia for India in March, I was stressed knowing that **repatriation** flights were **few and far between**.

### Note:

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6. **overplay one's hand** (phrase) – used to emphasize that someone's overconfidence in his/her ability or position will spoil his/her chance of success.  
**E.g.** Had the BCCI not wanted to make a point of everything being ***hunky dory*** in India, it could have played the tournament in the UAE like it did last year. That would have been safer in a small country where a majority of the citizens have been vaccinated... But the BCCI might have ***overplayed its hand***. And nearly paid the price.
7. **by/in leaps and bounds** (phrase) – used to say about how something increases or grows or improves very quickly; rapidly, swiftly, considerably, significantly.  
**E.g.** The science mostly gives us terrifying news of more melting, more storms, more droughts, more fires, more famines. But the technological solutions and the success of the organizing to address this largest of all crises have likewise grown ***by leaps and bounds***.
8. **get in on the act** (phrase) – to take part in an activity, especially one that is profitable/beneficial.  
**E.g.** Big business is ***getting in on the act*** as sales of 'preloved' (secondhand/used) garments boom. But can the trend curb our love for ***fast fashion***?
9. **one's pound of flesh** (phrase) – the act of insisting on receiving what you are entitled to, despite the fact that it may create problems for someone from whom it is demanded.  
**E.g.** It is seeking ***its pound of flesh*** by demanding that its nominee be made the Deputy Chief Minister (in Puducherry). Mr. Rangasamy's reservations in accommodating this demand are pronounced. The tiny territory has never had such a political post. The early disagreement between the allies has led to a delay in the swearing-in of the Cabinet. But it may not be easy for him to ***fend off*** the BJP.

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10. **cover all the bases** (phrase) - to do every single thing possible in a situation (in order to achieve success).  
**E.g.** Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) rallies to edge out Red Bull's Max Verstappen to win Spanish Grand Prix. **Revelling in** pulling off (achieving) what had looked like an unlikely victory Hamilton immediately paid tribute to the team effort, describing it as a "perfect strategy"... "We were still here late most evenings discussing strategy and we had **all the bases covered** in that respect..." the F1 driver said.
11. **nothing could be further from the truth** (phrase) - used to say that something is completely false/incorrect.  
**E.g.** Instagram has looked deep into my soul – and I really don't like what it has found there. Its algorithm suggests I am most interested in jewellery, luxury goods, electronic music, love and emotions. **Nothing could be further from the truth.**
12. **the writing is on the wall** (phrase) – sign, signal, indication, warning, presage, portent, omen, augury, harbinger (that some catastrophe/disaster is going to happen).  
**E.g.** The venom and the ugliness of this election must be put behind and Ms. Banerjee must work with the Opposition. If she does not heed **the writing on the wall**, the BJP is sure to breach the palace gates in the next elections.
13. **like a deer in the headlights** (phrase) – used to refer to a situation in which you can't think or act normally, especially through extreme surprise, anxiety or confusion.  
**E.g.** It is amply evident that the Finance Minister and her government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic is **like a deer caught in the headlights**... A knee-jerk (unthinking) and confused vaccination policy, with varying price structures and quotas for the Centre, States and private hospitals for the same vaccine, has made a royal (complete) mess of India's vaccination efforts.

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14. **bring something to bear** (phrase) – apply, exert, administer, use, exercise, employ, utilize (influence/power in order to do something).  
**E.g.** The priority must be de-escalation to protect the lives of civilians, treated with such ruthless and fatal disregard by both the Israeli government and Palestinian militants. The international community must **bring its weight to bear**. Former US President Donald Trump **egged** Israeli Prime Minister Mr, Benjamin Netanyahu **on** at every turn. There is now an administration in Washington that can address these issues seriously.
15. **there is no denying** (phrase) – used to say that something is undoubtedly true.  
**E.g.** These health system challenges will remain largely unaddressed with the government's market-oriented approach towards medical education. **There is no denying** that in order to meet the significant shortfall of qualified doctors in northern States, scaling up of medical education is warranted.
16. **come to a head** (phrase) - if something comes to a head, it reaches a critical point/state where you have to take action to deal with it; reach a crisis, come to a climax, reach a critical point.  
**E.g.** A key source of tension this time has been Jewish settlement in the east of Jerusalem... The issue **came to a head** in the climax of a decades-long attempt by Jewish groups to use the courts to evict Palestinian residents from Sheikh Jarrah, which lies at the heart of East Jerusalem.
17. **give ground** (phrase) - withdraw, retreat, give up, yield, back away, back off, draw back, fall back, pull back, pull out.  
**E.g.** In his **staunch** defence of Israel, Joe Biden is sticking to a course set decades ago as a young senator, and so far he has not **given ground** on the issue to the progressive wing of his party or many Jewish Democrats urging a tougher line towards Benjamin Netanyahu.

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18. **rise like a phoenix from the ashes** (phrase) - to emerge stronger and more powerful from a disaster/crisis.  
**E.g.** I sort of imagined myself coming out of lockdown **like a phoenix rising from the ashes**: slim, well-rested, healthy, glowing – my most beautiful self, essentially.
19. **close the stable door after the horse has bolted** (phrase) – try to do something too late after a bad or unpleasant thing has already happened.  
**E.g.** Matt Hancock, the (UK) health secretary, told MPs on Monday that the new variant is more transmissible but could be contained: by increasing the rate at which the second vaccine jab is administered and using surge testing to contain local outbreaks. This sounds like **the stable door being shut after the horse has bolted**.
20. **be a law unto oneself** (phrase) – do what you want unconventionally or act/behave independently by ignoring laws or rules.  
**E.g.** In his letter of resignation from the Committee of Administrators, Ramachandra Guha emphasised the bane of the ‘superstar’ culture in Indian cricket. It was no surprise. Captains have decided whom they want as coaches, senior players have often **been a law unto themselves**, and former players have sometimes wielded an unhealthy influence.
21. **leave (someone) out in the cold** (phrase) - to intentionally not include someone in a group or activity; ignore, exclude, neglect, abandon, omit, count out, miss out, dislike.  
**E.g.** India’s Parliament in September 2020 passed a Social Security Code. The SS Code 2020 merges existing social security laws and attempts to include informal workers within the ambit (limits) of social security administration. However, an examination of the code reveals that universalisation of social security remains an unfulfilled aspiration. A collage (collection/combination) of laws that **leaves the worker out in the cold**.

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22. **conspicuous by one's absence** (phrase) – clearly/visibly absent from a place where one/it should be present.  
**E.g.** Anyone familiar with India's democracy would find it difficult to believe that we function under a federal Constitution (which has no doubt many unitary characteristics). Harmony between the Centre, and specially those States headed by Opposition parties, is **conspicuous by its absence**.
23. **go hammer and tongs at** (phrase) – to do something with a lot of energy or enthusiasm, with great vigour, or with great effort.  
**E.g.** The mutual distrust between a large section of the media and the CPI(M) goes back a long way... Locked in a factional fight with veteran leader V.S. Achuthanandan then, Mr. Vijayan spared no occasion to **go hammer and tongs at** a section of the media for its "concerted leakage of inner party happenings".
24. **pin one's hopes on** (phrase) – rely on, depend on, have confidence in, believe in, put one's faith in.  
**E.g.** Even if the technologies on which we **pin our hopes for** the future deliver as expected and do not lead to much collateral damage – both of which are huge assumptions – they will not have fixed our mindsets. This is a crisis of culture and politics, not of science and technology.
25. **pick up the pieces** (phrase) – to get back to a normal situation after a disaster/period of difficulty.  
**E.g.** Now we are left to **pick up the pieces**. And though we hope the ceasefire will hold and the bombing has ended, the health sector in Gaza is still on the brink of collapse.
26. **send a shiver down the spine** (phrase) – to make someone feel extremely frightened/excited.  
**E.g.** The effect on other Belarusian dissidents will be chilling... The international community must do everything possible to keep a spotlight on the case of Mr Protasevich, and the hundreds of other detainees facing uncertain fates in Minsk prisons... Monday's outrage will **send a shiver down the spine** of every overseas critic of an authoritarian regime.

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27. **pull out all the stops** (phrase) – to make every effort to succeed; to do everything possible, try hard to achieve something.  
**E.g.** Cheap groceries, free delivery, on your doorstep in 10 to 20 minutes. Fast-track grocery services have sprung up like weeds during the pandemic with players **pulling out all the stops** to tempt shoppers. At least seven key players are **vying** for dominance in the UK.
28. **turn something on its head** (phrase) – to change the basis/nature of something (idea, fact, argument, etc.) completely.  
**E.g.** With its stay-at-home orders and restrictions on movements, with rush hours slowed, pollution lowered and shopping habits **turned on their head**, the pandemic quickly earned itself a nickname: the great pause.
29. **skeleton in the cupboard/closet** (phrase) – (embarrassing & unpleasant) things in a person's past that he/she wants to be (kept) hidden/undisclosed.  
**E.g.** Underlying it (i.e. centrism) is the belief that things are pretty OK now, that the people in charge should be trusted because power confers legitimacy, that those who want sweeping change are too loud or demanding or unreasonable, and that we should just all get along without looking at the **skeletons in the closet** and the stuff swept under the rug.
30. **take something lying down** (phrase) - accept something (insult, criticism, scolding, problem, etc.) without protest.  
**E.g.** Throughout Amazon's supply chain, Bezos's **behemoth** violates workers' safety, dignity and privacy, putting them to work in worksites designed to squeeze as much labor out of them for as little money as possible. Workers do not **take this lying down**. Supported by a myriad (a lot) of progressive allies, there is labor resistance all over Amazon's global map, with strikes and protests from Spain to São Paulo, from Delhi to Berlin.
31. **have/get/take the bit between one's teeth** (phrase) - to begin to do something (a task) with a lot of enthusiasm and determination.  
**E.g.** Chelsea win Champions League after Kai Havertz stuns Manchester City... Chelsea **had the bit between their teeth**; they put their bodies on the line, with the captain, César Azpilicueta, leading by example.

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