



CRAZY ENGLISH!

Let's face it, English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England, nor were French fries invented in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat. Quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square, and the guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, yet a wise man and a wise guy are opposites? Your house can burn up as it burns down, you fill in a form by filling it out, and an alarm goes off by going on. When the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible.

Take a look at these sentences. Each contains at least two words that look the same, but have different meanings. They also may be pronounced differently, depending on their meaning. Read them with your conversation partner. See if you can come up with new sentences using each.

The bandage was wound around the wound.

The farm was used to produce produce.

The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.

The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.

When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.

I didn't object to the object.

They were too close to the door to close it.

I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.

Upon seeing the tear in the painting, I shed a tear.

A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.

The insurance was invalid for the invalid.

Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.



Grammar Exercise Prefixes

A prefix is an element placed at the beginning of a word or stem to adjust or modify its meaning. In the exercise below, fill in the blanks with one of the given prefixes meaning “not.”

1. Don't wear that dress. It is very (**un-/an-**) ___flattering.
2. I am an (**im-/ir-**)___perfect person.
3. She usually gets better grades, but her performance on this test was (**a-/non-**)___typical.
4. I can't think of anyone who was more (**ir-/un-**) ___helpful.
5. We can't cross the bridge at this time of day. It is (**an-/im-**)___possible.
6. Your reaction doesn't make sense. It's (**il-/an-**) ___logical.
7. Not saying “please” and “thank you” is (**non-/im-**) ___polite.
8. He is always saying things that make people (**im-/un-**)___comfortable.
9. Stop being so (**ir-/non-**)___responsible!
10. You never know what Boris is going to do; he is very (**ir-/un-**)___predictable.
11. I want us to blend in, so be sure to wear something (**in-/an-**)___conspicuous.
12. The news report (**ir-/mis-**)___represented what actually happened at the party.
13. I can't believe they didn't say thank you! How (**im-/un-**)___grateful.
14. The house was so (**mis-/non-**)___descript that I would never have found it without your help.
15. Don't stand on the dock; it is (**ir-/un-**)___stable.

Answers: 1. unflattering 2. imperfect 3. atypical
4. unhelpful 5. impossible 6. illogical 7. impolite
8. uncomfortable 9. irresponsible 10. unpredictable
11. inconspicuous 12. misrepresented 13. ungrateful
14. nondescript 15. unstable



Conversation Practice

New Year's Resolutions

We like to greet the New Year with celebrations and good cheer. We watch fireworks or toast our friends and family with glasses of champagne at the stroke of midnight. It is also traditional to make New Year's resolutions: promises to ourselves to do better. These promises are not always kept, even with the best of intentions!

Some typical New Year's resolutions might be to lose weight, get more exercise, eat in a more healthy way, or spend more time with our families.

Sometime we resolve to follow our dreams—to do more art or to find a more satisfying job, for instance.

What are some of your New Year's resolutions? What other customs and traditions can you think of to celebrate the New Year? Discuss these with your conversation partner.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



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