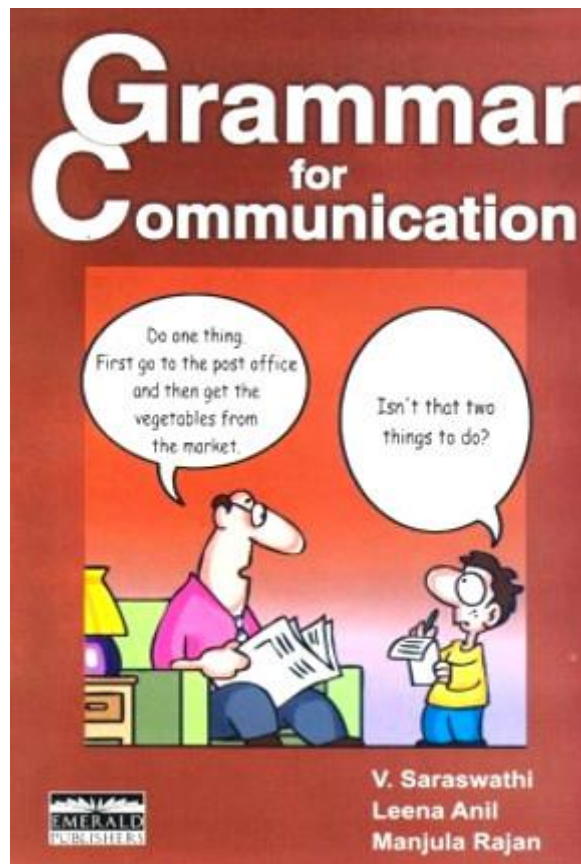


COMMUNICATIVE GRAMMAR

№ 2 November 2024



Some Facts About Grammar You Can Use to Annoy Your Loved Ones

1) 'Got' is legit. Get over it.

Back in college, I remember some brownnosing coeds schmoozing it up with a notoriously self-important English professor by saying how much the *Got Milk?* campaign irked them. I didn't have the words back then to argue with them, but I do remember thinking—what's the big deal? People say it all the time, and *Do you have milk?* just sounds way, way too stuffy and wordy. I'm not alone in thinking the verb *to get* is actually a very useful super verb that transcends its boundaries to mean a whole lot of things:

- To have – got milk
- To acquire – get a job
- To be – get rich
- To leave – get lost
- To understand – get it
- To move from one place to another – get over here

- To must – you’ve got to go

And on and on. A word like *get/got* is one of the jewels of the English language. It’s concise, versatile, and strong. What’s not to like? Most writers accept this word and its useful expressions in informal discourse, but it seems that as the line between formal and informal gets ever more blurred. I predict that in the not so far away future this word will show up in as much formal communication as it does in catchy advertising and conversational slang.



2) We Define Words – Not Dictionaries

Which came first: The Dictionary or the Word? As students, we are taught to look up words in the dictionary when we don’t know the meaning. Dictionaries appear as authorities on words and their meanings. It comes across as the dictionaries deciding upon a meaning for a word and then disseminating that meaning into the world by publishing a word with its attached definition.

This is, of course, entirely backwards. Dictionaries are compiled by people who go into the world looking for words and how they are actually being used. The revered Oxford English Dictionary was compiled by 4 or 5 different editors (and 100s of helpers) over 100 years. The editors consulted countless printed materials to find the actual common usages of thousands of words and kept the information on tiny slips of paper. The editors encountered death, sickness, poverty, political drama, and [even one criminally insane](#) contributor who provided definitions to thousands of words. One early editor of the dictionary researched mostly obscure words,

while a later editor looked mostly for common words. The dictionary, as a result, is a record of word usage compiled by different people with different agendas at different times. By the time it was done, it needed to be redone because so many words had already changed! So, in fact, a dictionary is a constantly outdated record of how words have been used so far. It does not decide how words are used or even what words are actually words. We decide that. So *ain't* IS a word. And so is *fartscicle*.

3) Fun with Dicky Birds

There is this thing, this glorious thing, that is responsible for so many expressions (like *tit for tat*, *bread/dough*) that are used in modern English that you, I'm betting, never knew about. [It's called Cockney Rhyming Slang. Here's how it works:](#)

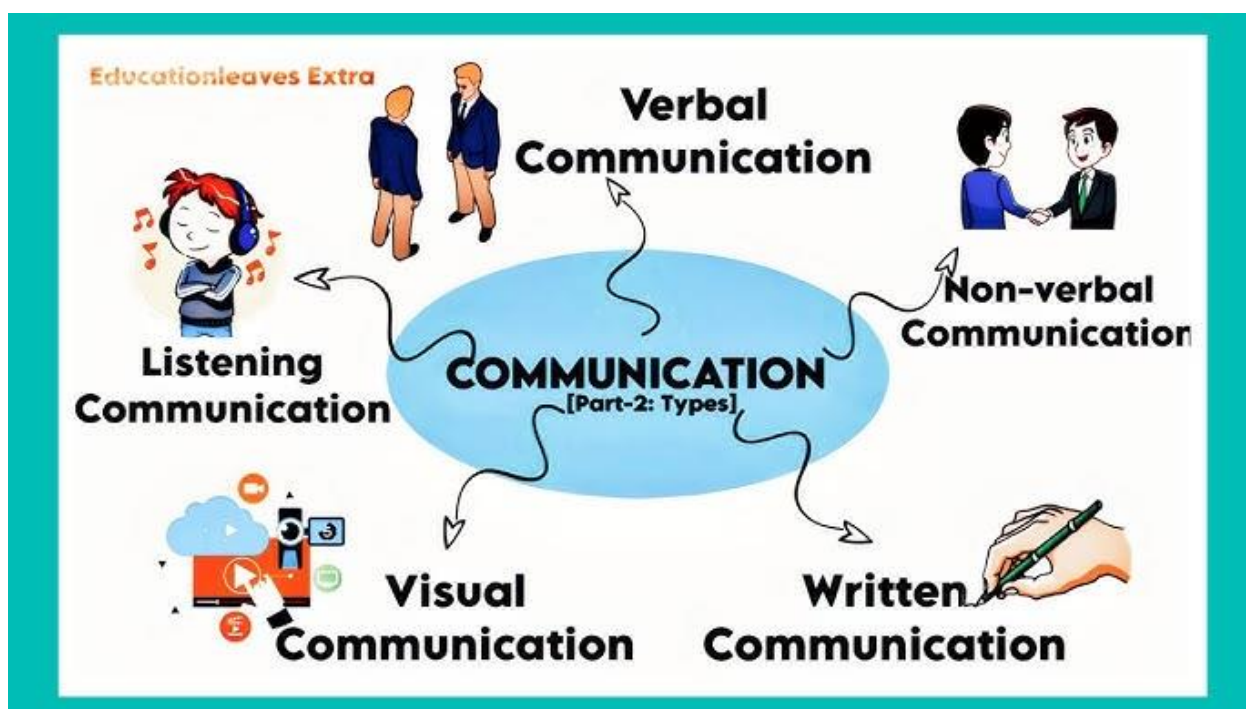
Cockney rhyming slang is a form of English slang which originated in the East End of London. Many of its expressions have passed into common language...It developed as a way of obscuring the meaning of sentences to those who did not understand the slang...

Rhyming slang works by replacing the word to be obscured with the first word of a phrase that rhymes with that word. For instance, "face" would be replaced by "boat," because face rhymes with "boat race." Similarly "feet" becomes "plates" ("plates of meat"), and "money" is "bread" (a very common usage, from "bread and honey"). Sometimes the full phrase is used, for example "Currant Bun" to mean "The Sun" (often referring to the British tabloid newspaper of that name).

Check out this awesome link for more [Cockney Rhyming Slang](#)—old and new. Ever wondered why making fart sounds with your lips is called “blowing raspberries”? Well, because it is a shortened version of “raspberry tart” which, of course, rhymes with “fart.” In fact, there is a whole list of slang words for fart.

- Cupid's dart
- Horse and cart
- Horse
- Orson
- Jam Tart
- False Start
- Joe Hart

Oh, and *Dicky Birds* is rhyming slang for *words*.



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