

Confusing British phrases

Every language has a few phrases that don't translate very well and British English is no exception. Here are a few phrases that may confuse anyone who didn't grow up in the UK.

A few sandwiches short of a picnic

Someone that lacks common sense may be described as "a few sandwiches short of a picnic".
e.g. She's lovely but she's a few sandwiches short of a picnic.

Bee's knees

If something is said to be the "bee's knees" it is regarded as excellent or very high quality.
e.g. My new car is the bee's knees.

Bob's your uncle

This is a phrase that means "and there it is" or "and there you have it". You often use it to conclude a set of simple instructions.

e.g. Add a teabag to a cup, pour in boiled water, leave for a couple of minutes and Bob's your uncle, your tea is ready.

Botch job

A repair job that has been completed in a hurry and unskilfully.
e.g. John did a botch job on these shelves.

Chinwag

This word means a chat with someone.
e.g. I had a good chinwag with Joanne.

Full of beans

This phrase describes someone who is very enthusiastic or lively.
e.g. James was full of beans.

Quids in

This describes a situation where someone has profited or is likely to profit from something.
e.g. If there is a call for my skills, I'll be quids in.

Sod's Law

This is a phrase, often used humorously, that means "if anything can go wrong, then it definitely will go wrong".

e.g. It will be Sod's Law that by the time I get to the pub the landlord will have run out of beer!

Spanner in the works

This means a person or thing that prevents the successful completion of a plan.

e.g. Someone is trying to throw a spanner in the works, but we won't allow them to stop the job going ahead.

Turn over a new leaf

To start to act or behave in a more responsible way.

e.g. Apparently the boy has turned over a new leaf.