

Adspeak: Catchy Slogans [B1]

Alcuni slogan sono talmente ben riusciti che fanno ormai parte della lingua di tutti i giorni e sono usati da chiunque. Alcuni sono internazionali, altri parte integrante della cultura di un Paese. Sicuramente, li usi anche tu!

Getting the cultural reference behind an expression feels great, right? And a surprising number of expressions enter the English language from advertising campaigns: think of the US firm McDonald's "I'm lovin' it" or Nike's "Just do it!". In some cases, even native speakers **end up** using the expression without thinking about the product it was originally advertising. In the UK there are many advertising slogans (memorable phrases) or straplines (short, **snappy** slogans) that have captured the public imagination so successfully that they've become integrated into everyday English.

TIN TRUTH

In the mid-1990s, the market**ing** department of Ronseal, the manufacturers of **wood stain**, decided that instead of trying to make **wood stain** glamorous, they would emphasise the boring, predictable nature of their product as a positive thing. There's an expression in English, "Like watching paint **dry**", which means something is very **dull**. They developed this idea of **reliability** in their campaign. The TV ads show an ordinary guy pain**ting** his door using a **tin** of quick-drying **wood stain**. As he paints, he tells the audience that the product he's using is: "In a **tin**... it's **wood stain**... and it dries quickly." In other words, you can expect the product to perform exactly as specified. The expression "Does exactly what it says on the **tin**" is now often used in other contexts, meaning that a product or situation **delivers** exactly what's been promised. The slogan has even been included in the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms.

LOVE IT OR HATE IT

It's almost black, super-salty, and you eat it on toast. It is, of course, Marmite, a polarising spread made of yeast extract. Some people love it (disclaimer: I'm one of them), while others hate it, but it's rare to find anyone ambiguous about the taste. Instead of trying to persuade the haters that Marmite's okay really, the advertising campaign turned this controversy to their advantage. In the mid-1990s, they made "You either love it or hate it" the brand's slogan. Research shows that having a percentage of consumers who hate your product can make those who love it more likely to identify with a team, and buy it. Since then, Marmite has become a metaphor for anything that causes polarised reactions for and against: the so-called Marmite Effect. In 2010, the far-right, anti-immigration party the British National Party (BNP) lost a court case to the producers of the spread after making a propaganda video comparing the BNP to Marmite.

SIMPLES!

If you want to express how easy something is you could say "Simple!" If you also want to show off your knowledge of British popular culture, try: "Simples!" This strapline originated in an ad campaign launched in 2009 by a price comparison website called Comparethemarket.com. Its humorous ads feature various animated Russian meerkats, including a billionaire called Aleksandr Orlov, who is the fictional founder of a website called Comparethemeerkat.com. According to the campaign's quirky concept, Aleksandr is often contacted by people trying to find the website Comparethemarket.com, as the names of this site and his own sound similar. Aleksandr's heavily-accented English includes the invented variation "Simples!" In 2019, the strapline 'simples' was added to the Oxford English Dictionary. The campaign's enduring success came with consequences: in 2022, Comparethemarket.com's owners BGL pulled the ads from around news bulletins in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

-OLOGY

A slightly older campaign that still consistently rates among viewers' favourites is the 1980s series of ads from telecoms company British Telecom aimed at encouraging people to make more phone calls. The ad series features a Jewish grandmother character called Beattie (played by actor and comedian Maureen Lipman), who makes phonecalls to various members of her family. In the most famous ad, we see Beattie phoning her teenage grandson Anthony to congratulate him on his school exam results. But Anthony has to break the news that, in fact, he's failed all the exams... except for those in pottery and sociology. When Beattie hears he's passed sociology, she's delighted, telling him: "You've got an -ology. You're a scientist!" 'Having an -ology' has come to mean having a formal qualification that may not be of much practical use.

TRY IT

Perhaps it's because we've heard them so many times, but advertising slogans or especially the shorter straplines do seem to stick in our heads. Videos of all the ads mentioned in this article are available online if you want to see how the straplines were used originally. Then just add some of the expressions to your conversations in English. Simples! See what I did there?

AND MANY MORE...

Here are some international brand straplines or slogans that have been integrated into everyday English and which, unlike the examples above, don't need much explanation — even if they sometimes might not make much sense! "Exceedingly good" Mr. Kipling cakes "Because I'm worth it" L'Oreal "Every little helps" Tesco supermarket "They're grrreat" Frosties cereal "Gives you wings" Red Bull "The best a man can get" Gillette "Once you pop, you can't stop" Pringles "Impossible is nothing" Adidas "Progress through technology" Audi "Taste the feeling" Coca-Cola "Finger lickin' good" KFC "Think different" Apple "There are some things money can't buy. For

everything else, there's Mastercard" Mastercard "Yes we can!" Barack
Obama "Make America Great Again" Donald Trump

Glossary

- **disclaimer** = premessa
- **meerkats** = suricati
- **break the news** = dare la notizia
- **failed** = essere bocciato
- **pottery** = ceramica
- **passed** = superare
- **end up** = finire per
- **tin** = barattolo, latta
- **delivers** = mantenere, offrire
- **yeast** = lievito
- **stick** = rimanere impresso, restare in mente
- **snappy** = accattivanti
- **dry** = asciugarsi
- **reliability** = affidabilità
- **polarising** = dividere, suscitare reazioni opposte
- **spread** = crema spalmabile
- **court case** = causa legale
- **slightly** = leggermente
- **rates** = classificarsi
- **wood stain** = vernice per legno
- **dull** = noioso
- **quirky** = stravagante
- **pulled the ads from** = ritirare
- **Getting** = capire, comprendere
- **show off** = vantare