

Pig Latin

Pig Latin, or "Igpay Atinlay" is a language game or argot in which English words are altered, usually by adding a fabricated suffix or by moving the onset or initial consonant or consonant cluster of a word to the end of the word and adding a vocalic syllable to create such a suffix. For example, "Wikipedia" would become "Ikipediaway" (the "W" is moved from the beginning and has "ay" appended to create a suffix). The objective is to conceal the words from others not familiar with the rules. The reference to Latin is a deliberate misnomer; Pig Latin is simply a form of argot, cant, or jargon unrelated to Latin, and the name is used for its English connotations as a strange and foreign-sounding language. It is most often used by young children as a fun way to confuse people unfamiliar with Pig Latin.^[1]

Pig Latin	
Igpay Atinlay	
Spoken in	<u>English-speaking world</u>
Classification	<u>Language game</u> or <u>Argot</u>
See also: <u>Language games</u>	

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Background

For words that begin with consonant sounds, all letters before the initial vowel are placed at the end of the word sequence. Then, "ay" is added, as in the following examples:^{[2][3]}

- "pig" = "igpay"
- "latin" = "atinlay"
- "banana" = "ananabay"
- "will" = "illway"
- "butler" = "utlerbay"
- "happy" = "appyhay"
- "duck" = "uckday"
- "me" = "emay"
- "bagel" = "agelbay"

When words begin with consonant clusters (multiple consonants that form one sound), the whole sound is added to the end when speaking or writing.^[4]

- "smile" = "ilesmay"
- "string" = "ingstray"
- "stupid" = "upidstay"
- "glove" = "oveglay"
- "trash" = "ashtray"
- "floor" = "oorflay"
- "store" = "orestay"

For words that begin with vowel sounds, the vowel is left alone, and most commonly 'yay' is added to the end. But in different parts of the world, there are different 'dialects' of sorts. Some people may add 'way' or 'hay' or other endings. Examples are:

- "eat" = "eatyay" or "eatay"
- "omelet" = "omeletyay" or "omeletay"
- "are" = "areyay" or "areay"
- "egg" = "eggyay" or "eggay"
- "explain" = "explainyay"
- "always" = "alwaysyay" or "alwaysay"
- "ends" = "endsyay" or "endsay"
- "honest" = "honestyay"
- "I" = "Iyay"

An alternative convention for words beginning with vowel sounds, one removes the initial vowel(s) along with the first consonant or consonant cluster. This usually only works for words with more than one syllable and offers a variant of the words in keeping with the mysterious, unrecognizable sounds of the converted words. Examples are:

- "every" = "eryevay"
- "another" = "otheranay"
- "under" = "erunday"
- "island" = "andislay"
- "elegant" = "egantelay"

Sentence structure remains the same as it would in English. Pronunciation of some words may be a little difficult for beginners, but people can easily understand Pig Latin with practice.

Origins and history

One of the oldest examples of Pig Latin was written by William Shakespeare, whose 1598 play, Love's Labour's Lost, includes a reference to dog Latin:^[5]

Costard: Go to; thou hast it ad dungill, at the fingers' ends, as they say.

Holofernes: O, I smell false Latine; dunghill for unguem.

— *Love's Labour's Lost*, William Shakespeare

The modern version of Pig Latin appears in a 1919 Columbia Records album containing what sounds like the modern variation, by a singer named Arthur Fields. The song, called Pig Latin Love, is followed by the subtitle "I-Yay Ove-Lay oo-yay earie-day".^[6] The Three Stooges used it on multiple occasions, most notably Tassels in the Air, a 1938 short where Moe Howard attempts to teach Curley Howard how to use it, thereby conveying the rules to the audience. In an earlier (1934) episode, Three Little Pigskins, Larry Fine attempts to impress a woman with his skill in Pig Latin, but it turns out that she knows it, too. No explanation of the rules is given. A few months prior in 1934, in the Our Gang short film Washee Ironee, Spanky tries to speak to an Asian boy by using Pig Latin.^[7] Ginger Rogers sang a verse of "We're in the Money" in Pig Latin in an elaborate Busby Berkeley production number in the film Gold Diggers of 1933, (Trippy Ginger Rogers Pig Latin. "YouTube"). The film, the third highest grossing of that year, was inducted into the National Film Registry and that song included in the all-time top 100 movie songs by the American Film Institute. Merle Travis ends his song "When My Baby Double Talks To Me" with the phrase, "What a aybybay", where the last word is Pig Latin for "baby".

Two Pig Latin words that have entered into mainstream American English are "ixnay" or "icksnay", the Pig Latin version of "nix" (itself a borrowing of German nichts^[8]), which is used as a general negative; and "amscray", Pig Latin for "scram", meaning "go away" or "get out of here".^{[9][10][11][12]}

In other languages

French has the *loucherbem* (or *louchébem*, or *largonji*^[13]) coded language, which supposedly was originally used by butchers (*boucher* in French).^[14] In *loucherbem*, the leading consonant cluster is moved to the end of the word (as in Pig Latin) and replaced by an *L*, and then a suffix is added at the end of the word (-*oche*, -*em*, -*oque*, etc., depending on the word). Example: *combien* (how much) = *lombienquès*. Similar coded languages are *verlan* and *langue de feu* (see fr:Javanais (argot)). A few *louchébem* words have become usual French words: *fou* (crazy) = *loufoque*, *portefeuille* (wallet) = *larfeuille*, *en douce* (on the quiet) = *en loucedé*. Also similar is the widely used French argot *verlan*, in which the syllables of words are transposed. Verlan is a French slang that is quite similar to English pig Latin. It is spoken by separating a word into syllables and reversing the syllables.

Verlan was first documented as being used as far back as the 19th century. Back in the 19th century it was spoken as code by criminals in effort to conceal illicit activities within conversations around other people, even the police. Currently, Verlan has been increasingly used in areas just outside major cities mainly populated by migrant workers. This language has served as a language bridge between many of these migrant workers from multiple countries and origins and has been so widely and readily used that it has spread into advertising, film scripts, French rap and hip-hop music, media, in some French dictionaries and in some cases, words that have been Verlanned have actually replaced their original words. The new uses of Verlan and how it has become incorporated into the French culture has all happened within just a few decades.^[15]

Here is an example of some French words that have been Verlanned and their English meaning:^[16]

French	Verlan	English
bande	deban	group
bizarre	zarbi	weird
Black (Eng.)	kebla	black person
bloqué	kéblo	blocked
bonjour	jourbon	hello
bus	sub	bus
cable	bleca	trendy
café	feca	cafe
classe	secla	class
clope	peclot	cigarette
cool (Eng.)	looc	cool
démon	mondé	demon
disque	skeud	album
fais chier	fais ieche	it makes one angry
femme	meuf	woman
flic	keuf	cop
fou	ouf	crazy
français	cefran	French
jobard	barjot	crazy
l'envers	verlan	reverse
louche	chelou	shady
mec	keum	man
mère	reum	mother
métro	tromé	train
musique	sicmu	music
père	reup	father
piscine	cinepi	pool (swimming)
poulet	lepou	chicken (similar to "pig" in English; for police officer)
pourri	ripou	corrupt
rap	pera	rap (music)
truc	keutru	stuff
vas-y	zyva	go for it

Some *verlan* words have gone through a second round of such transformation. For instance *reubeu* (<https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/reubeu>) is verlan for *keur*, which itself is verlan for *Arabe*.

In popular culture

Besides the uses noted above in American comedy films, Pig Latin can also be heard in the 1998 Hollywood film, *Slums of Beverly Hills*, accompanied by subtitles.

Pig Latin is also used in the 1993 film *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* and is referred to as “New Latin”.

Pig Latin is also briefly heard in the science fiction horror television series *Stranger Things*, Season 3 (2019).

Pig Latin is also briefly heard in the adult animated television sitcom *Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law*, Season 2 (2004).

Pig Latin is also referenced in Disney's 1994 film "The Lion King" when majordomo Zazu attempts to disguise his criticism of the hyenas by admonishing Simba, "Ixnay on the upidstay" (Nix on the stupid), but he is understood by Shenzi.

Notes

1. "What exactly is Pig Latin, is it a language? And how is it a mystery? - Everything After Z by Dictionary.com" (<https://www.dictionary.com/e/pig-latin/>). *Everything After Z by Dictionary.com*. 2010-10-05. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180827075258/https://www.dictionary.com/e/pig-latin/>) from the original on 2018-08-27. Retrieved 2018-08-27.
2. "Useful phrases in Pig Latin (IgpaAtinlay)" (<http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/piglatin.htm>). *www.omniglot.com*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170104162923/http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/piglatin.htm>) from the original on 2017-01-04. Retrieved 2017-01-03.
3. Barlow, Jessica A. (2001-09-01). "Individual differences in the production of initial consonant sequences in Pig Latin" (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0024384100000437>). *Lingua*. **111** (9): 667–696. doi:10.1016/S0024-3841(00)00043-7 (<https://doi.org/10.1016%2FS0024-3841%2800%2900043-7>). ISSN 0024-3841 (<https://www.worldcat.org/issn/0024-3841>).
4. "How to Speak Pig Latin" (<https://www.wikihow.com/Speak-Pig-Latin>). Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170307044859/http://www.wikihow.com/Speak-Pig-Latin>) from the original on 2017-03-07.
5. "What's the origin of pig Latin?" (<http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/2163/whats-the-origin-of-pig-latin>). *The Straight Dope*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160204224225/http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/2163/whats-the-origin-of-pig-latin>) from the original on 2016-02-04. Retrieved 2016-01-28.
6. **I Always Wondered:** Where did Pig Latin come from? (<http://ialwayswondered.jarrettgreen.com/2011/05/25/where-did-pig-latin-come-from/>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160129214016/http://ialwayswondered.jarrettgreen.com/2011/05/25/where-did-pig-latin-come-from/>) 2016-01-29 at the [Wayback Machine](#)
The consensus seems to be that the version of Pig Latin we know today, was born sometime in the 20th century. In 1919 Columbia records released an album with Arthur Fields singing “Pig Latin Love”. The Subtitle “I-Yay Ove-Lay oo-yay earie-day” indicates that this is the modern form of Pig Latin we recognize today. I was able to scrounge up a photograph of the 1919 sheet music on eBay. Below the Pig Latin subtitle is the translation, “(I love you dearie)”, suggesting that perhaps this form of Pig Latin hadn’t taken root among the general public yet.
7. "Archived copy" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcMWkY-Wlkk#t=10m35s>). Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20161126140403/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcMWkY-Wlkk#t=10m35s>) from the original on 2016-11-26. Retrieved 2016-03-28.
8. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. (<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/127424>)
9. Blake, Barry J. (2010). *Secret Language: Codes, Tricks, Spies, Thieves, and Symbols* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=HAhYqpnC2H8C&q=ixnay+pig+latin&pg=PR48-IA149>). OUP Oxford. ISBN 9780191614712.

10. Miller, D. Gary (2014). *English Lexicogenesis* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=oNfQAgAAQBAJ&q=amscray+pig+latin&pg=PA91>). OUP Oxford. ISBN 9780199689880.
11. Hendrickson, Robert (1998). *QPB Encyclopedia of Word and Phrase Origins* (<https://archive.org/details/qpbencyclopediao00robe>). Facts on File. "amscray ixnay pig latin."
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13. "LARGONJI : Définition de LARGONJI" (<http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/largonji>). Cnrtl.fr. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20131230235148/http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/largonji>) from the original on 2013-12-30. Retrieved 2014-03-10.
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15. Stille, Alexander (2002-08-17). "Backward runs French. Reels the mind. Verlan, a kind of code among immigrants, both confuses and intrigues" (<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=STND&sw=w&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA90553064&asid=b0475de0be51d24e83abf3ddb8258678>). *The New York Times*.
16. Davis, J.J. (Autumn 2004). "Autumn, 2004, Vol. 29 Issue 3, p7, 2 p". *Verbatim*. **29**: 7.

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External links

-  The dictionary definition of *:Category:English Pig Latin terms* at Wiktionary

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