



Dear Reader,

April's issue on eggcorns seems to have struck a cord with readers – or is that struck a *chord*? Many of you eagerly shared your favourite (or *least* favourite) garbled-but-not-quite-nonsensical versions of common expressions.

Here is a second helping of eggcorns to tie you over until the next issue – or is that *tide* you over?



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Cracking More Eggcorns

1. **Give it a green light / give it a green line.** As you might expect, giving someone a *green light* means giving them approval to proceed. While giving someone a *green line* does suggest laying out the appropriate path to follow, this eggcorn likely arose from a traffic collision between the original expression and other expressions such as *draw the line* and *toe the line*.
2. **Nip it in the bud / nip it in the butt.** Any budding scholar of idiom or horticulture learns that *nip it in the bud* means to deal with a small problem before it reaches full bloom. As English professor and author Paul Brian **points out**, “The hilariously mistaken *nip it in the butt* suggests stimulation to action rather than stopping it.” Pre-emptive though the strike may be, the consequences are outside the scope of this newsletter.
3. **Home in on / hone in on.** To *home in* on something means to focus attention on it. The expression likely arose when warfare took to the skies and pilots began *homing in* on their targets. The variant *hone in* is attributed to former U.S. president George H. Bush – the Bush family is of course renowned for its malapropisms. To hone means to sharpen, so *hone in* does convey the idea of grinding away at something, ever sharpening one’s focus.
4. **Free rein / Free reign.** To give *free rein* means to grant freedom of action, as when a horseback rider slackens the reins. *Free reign* is definitely a free range eggcorn, though it does also convey the sense of giving permission to act freely.
5. **Wrought iron / rot iron.** *Wrought iron* is simply ironwork forged by hand (or made to look that way). But *rot iron* only makes sense if the iron has rusted to the point of brittleness.
6. **Without further ado / Without further adieu.** To do something *without further ado* means to proceed with no more fuss. On the other hand, *without further adieu* would imply proceeding with no more goodbyes. Not to make much ado about it, we’ll just stop this one in its tracks and bid it a final farewell.

Buzz Off : *No problem*

The expression “No problem” is gaining currency, especially among younger age groups, as a way to acknowledge thanks or praise for a service rendered. This is fine in an informal setting, but it can sound offhand or even jarring when uttered by a service provider who’s just been thanked for performing his or her normal duties. As far as clients or customers are concerned, doing one’s job should never be a problem. Better to stick to the traditional responses:

- “You’re welcome.”
- “My pleasure.”
- “Thank you.”

Is there a buzzword you would like to banish? Just send your suggestion to writer@ecwriting.com, and we’ll do our best to send it packing in a future issue.

Parting Words

“You can see a lot just by observing.”

– Yogi Berra, Major League Baseball player and manager