

Idioms and slang held the key for English language learners in 2010

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The most popular searches in 2010 on *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* (CDO) show that idioms and slang held the key to learning English as a second language.

The *CDO* search results from 2010 show that some of the top terms language learners searched for weren't just words, but idioms and slang – showing how they can be one of the hardest aspects of the [English](#) language to learn and teach.

Some of the top 2010 idiom and slang searches on *CDO* were:

'Eat your heart out'

CDO definition: If someone says eat your heart out followed by the name of a famous person, they are joking that they are even better than that person.

'Plus ça change'

CDO definition: The more things change, the more they stay the same. Used when a change does not result in an improvement in a situation.

'No mean feat'

CDO definition: A great achievement.

'Having said that'

CDO definition: Despite what has just been said.

'Law and order'

CDO definition: When the laws of a country are being obeyed, especially when the police or army are used to make certain of this.

'Right you are'

CDO definition: Said to show that you understand and agree.

'Strike a balance'

CDO definition: If you strike a balance between two things, you accept parts of both things in order to satisfy some of the demands of both sides in an argument, rather than all the demands of just one side.

'Catch a few rays'

CDO definition: to stay outside in the sun for a period of time.

The top single word searched for in 2010 was 'dictionary', closely followed by 'bigot', which showed a huge spike in April 2010 after Gordon Brown made his infamous gaffe on the UK election campaign trail, and 'inception', which spiked after the movie of the same name came out in July 2010.

18.4 million visitors made 56.5 million visits to *CDO* in 2010, making it the most visited learner's dictionary site in the world. To build on its success, *CDO* has just launched its biggest ever changes to enhance the

learning experience for its visitors.

The search function and its results have been improved, and a blog called About Words, which looks at how the English language behaves, is being developed. The team behind the blog are writers Kate Woodford and Elizabeth Walter, co-authors of the award-winning *Collocations Extra*, and Hugh Rawson, whose books include *Rawson's Dictionary of Euphemisms & Other Doubletalk*; *Wicked Words*. *New Words*, a listing of words and meanings that have just started to be used in English, has also been launched. Users of the site can join in the discussion by leaving comments or voting.

Further developments for *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* in 2011 are expected to include a Spanish bilingual dictionary.

Paul Heacock, Dictionaries Publishing Manager at Cambridge University Press, said: “What these idiom and slang search terms tell us is that learning how to use and apply them is very important to students, as it can make the difference between being a good English speaker and a great English speaker. Many people who are learning English as a [second language](#) can understand English in a formal context, but they know that making the leap from formal to informal can help their English language skills develop in a very real and useable way.

“At *Cambridge Dictionaries Online*, we have a great range of tools for learners of all abilities to find out more about the English language and our new blog and search facility will help them to develop their every day [language](#) skills even more.”

Provided by Cambridge University

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