

Do you speak "Engrish"?

A new form of English invented by the Japanese.

Information Box

English online

For more information on this topic, visit the website www.english.com. There's also a book all about "Engrish" called *The Joys of English* by Steven Cairnes.



"I wonder why coffee tastes so good when you're **naked** with your family". What is this? Actually it's the text from a Japanese advert for coffee. And it's a fine example of the new form of English known as "Engrish".

English is Cool!

Have you ever bought a T-shirt with some foreign-language writing on it? A few French words perhaps? Some attractive but **meaningless** Chinese writing? In Japan, it's really typical to buy products with English words on them. In fact, English phrases have long appeared in Japanese advertising and product design. They are apparently there only to make products and services look cool to the Japanese public. But the funny thing is most of the words or expressions don't really make much sense. And now they've **come up with** a word to describe this new form of written English: "Engrish".

English is "Engrish"

"Engrish" can be defined as the incorrect English that appears in Japanese advertising and on products. While the term may refer to spoken English, it is more often used to describe written English. "Engrish" has been found on everything, including poorly-translated signs, **menus**, **instruction manuals** and advertisements, and strange T-shirt slogans. So, why is it known as "Engrish"? Well, the term originates from the fact that the Japanese do not have separate sounds for the letters "R" and "L". So, native Japanese speakers who aren't **fluent** in English often mispronounce English words containing the letters "R" and "L". For example, instead of saying "rice", they may say "**lice**"; and instead of saying "like", they may say "rike".

Video Game English

There are basically two types of "Engrish": misspelled or grammatically-incorrect instructions (often found in instruction manuals and video games); and illogical combinations of words (often found in advertising or on T-shirts). Most of the video game examples are the result of poor Japanese-to-English translations. Here are a few memorable "Engrish" phrases from video games:

- a) Engrish: All your base are belong to us.
Correct: All your bases belong to us.
- b) Engrish: I feel asleep.
Correct: I feel tired/sleepy.
- c) Engrish: You fail it.
Correct: You fail.
- d) Engrish: Victory.
Correct: Victory.
- e) Engrish: Entry your name.
Correct: Enter your name.
- f) Engrish: A winner is you!
Correct: You win!
- g) Engrish: This guy are sick.
Correct: These guys are sick / This guy is sick.



Advertising & T-Shirt English

And here are some examples of Engrish from T-shirts and advertising:

- a) From a **cooling fan**: Going faster is the system job.
- b) On a packet of **chopsticks**: Please to try your nice Chines food with chopsticks the traditional and typical of Chines glorious history and cultural.
- c) On a T-shirt: I do a lot of thing.
- d) On a T-shirt: My boyfriend out of tow.
- e) On a T-shirt: **Spank** on me.
- f) On a T-shirt: Modesty does not here.
- g) On a car: **Outlaw** excellent company big sedan. So, would you like to learn "Engrish"?



Information Box "Engrish" in the cinema

There's an example of "Engrish" in the film *Lethal Weapon 4*. In one scene, Mel Gibson's character is speaking to Uncle Benny, a Chinese restaurant owner and Triad member. He asks Uncle Benny for some "fliced lice" (instead of the correct "fried rice"). To which Benny responds, "It's fried rice!" And in the film *Team America*, the North Korean leader can be heard singing the song "I'm so ronery" (which should be "I'm so lonely").

GLOSSARY

naked *adj*
with no clothes on

meaningless *adj*
that has no sense or meaning

to come up with something *exp*
to think of something

a menu *n*
a list of food served in a restaurant with the corresponding prices

an instructional manual *n*
a book that tells you how to use a machine

to be fluent in a language *exp*
to speak a foreign language perfectly

lice *n*
small insects that live on the bodies of animals or people

a cooling fan *n*
an electrical appliance that creates cool air

chopsticks *n*
two thin sticks that Chinese and other Asian people use to eat food

to spank *vb*
to hit someone on the bottom (the part of your body that you sit on)

to outlaw *vb*
if something is "outlawed", it is made illegal