

Railway Expressions

For Curious Linguists



Kickoff: Read and answer the questions.

1. Are there trains in your country?
2. Do you enjoy travelling by train?
3. Do you know anything about the history of trains?
4. Can you think of any expressions in English with the following words?

train track rails steam

Reading: Read the introductory paragraph together.

The railway has played a significant role in the development of British society and culture. It has not only revolutionised transportation and commerce, but has also had a lasting impact on the English language. The first intercity passenger railway was the Liverpool-Manchester line which opened in 1830, marking the beginning of a new era in transportation and communication. Many expressions related to the railway have become part of everyday conversation in Britain, and they provide a fascinating glimpse into the country's history and heritage.

From “being on the right track” to “running out of steam”, the railway has left a rich legacy of idioms and expressions that are still widely used in Britain and worldwide today. Not only that, but their connection to progress means they are commonly used in terms of business. These expressions offer a unique window into the cultural, social, and historical significance of the railway in Britain.

Vocabulary: Complete the expressions with the missing words in the boxes.

| | | | |
|-----------|---------|------|-------|
| sidetrack | off | one | full |
| steam | thought | stay | rails |
| on | right | back | wreck |

1. to be _____ track: This means to be making progress as planned and to be on schedule.
2. to be on the _____ track: This means to be on the correct path to success.
3. to _____: This means to intentionally divert from a main topic of discussion or from a plan.
4. to _____ on track: This means to remain on the course or path that has been set or intended.
5. to go _____ track: This means to accidentally deviate from the plan or conversation topic.
6. to get _____ on track: This means to return to the original plan or intended course of action.
7. _____ steam ahead: This means to proceed with full energy, enthusiasm, or momentum.
8. run out of _____: This means to lose energy, enthusiasm, or momentum.
9. lose your train of _____: This means to forget what you were thinking or saying.

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10. have a _____ -track mind: This means to be single-minded and obsessed with a single idea.
11. go off the _____: This means to become erratic, unstable, or uncontrolled.
12. be a train _____: This means to be a disaster, a failure, or a complete mess.

Speaking: **Ask and answer the questions as a group.**

1. What tools do you use to know if you are on track with your work or studies?
2. How does it feel when you are sure you are on the right track towards your goals?
3. Have you ever sidetracked from your goals to do something different for a period of time?
4. Do you find it difficult to stay on track when you are studying or working from home?
5. What causes you to go off track in a conversation or in a meeting?
6. What helps you to get back on track when you realise that you have been distracted?
7. Do you find it easiest to move full steam ahead in the morning, afternoon, or in the evening?
8. Have you ever felt like you had totally run out of steam and couldn't go on any longer?
9. How often do you feel like you lose your train of thought?
10. How can having a one-track mind be harmful to reaching your goals?
11. Can you think of any celebrities or famous people who have gone off the rails?
12. When was the last time your house was like a train wreck and what was the reason?

