

You Have Just Been Phubbed!

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A few days ago, I hung out with my friend Ellie. We were sitting in a café and catching up on some *gossip*. However, she kept using her smartphone and was busy **exchanging** instant and **text messages** with others. Our **conversation** was **interrupted** every time she looked at her phone. I didn't enjoy our talk, and neither did she. Finally, I had no choice but to leave her alone with her smartphone. I had just been phubbed!

“Phub” is a new word that **combines** two words—“phone” and “*snub*.” When you snub someone, you ignore him or her, which often upsets that person. Therefore, “phubbing” is doing this by keeping using your smartphone in others’ **presence**. It has become a common habit that can have a **negative effect** on personal relationships. Yesterday, for example, I was looking at my Facebook page on my smartphone when my sister asked me for help with her homework. I wasn't happy about the interruption, so I **yelled** at her, “Can't you see I'm busy?” As a result, she had no choice but to struggle with her homework by herself. My friend Ellie is normally a polite person, and so am I. However, when we are absorbed in our smartphones, we often **behave** rudely toward other people. We just can't resist interacting with our electronic devices.

Smartphones are so **appealing**. They allow people to share things with others anytime, anywhere. People often use them to send instant messages or visit *social networking* websites. There is even a growing trend toward using smartphones to take *selfies*. That is, more and more people like to take photos of themselves and post the attractive ones online. It is **obvious** that people love **communication** and are **eager** to be **connected** with others.

However, something **odd** happens. People seldom talk to others when they are using their smartphones. While smartphone users are busy interacting with others far away, they often phub the people who are actually next to them. Smartphones seem to encourage people to **engage** in the *virtual* world rather than the real world. This can not only change personal relationships but cause **unpleasant incidents** or even **harm** in people's lives. For instance, many traffic accidents occur because people are using smartphones and not paying attention to the road. In addition, due to their smartphone *addiction*, many people can no longer appreciate things in their actual environment.

It feels bad to be phubbed, and you certainly don't want to hurt your friends' feelings by phubbing them. So, using smartphones too much is not a good idea. Oh, are you using one right now? Maybe it's time to put it down and say hello to the friends next to you. They will be happier to share things with you face to face.

—by Ian Fletcher

As a student learning English in Taiwan, I had always been confident of my **ability** to speak English. When I **traveled** to the United States one summer, though, I quickly discovered that I still had **plenty** to learn, especially **regarding** the **informal** English often used there. That is, I found that the English spoken in the United States could be quite different from the English that I had learned in *textbooks* in Taiwan.

As soon as I arrived in the United States, I was tripped up by a common American **greeting**. In Taiwan, I had been taught to ask “How are you?” and then to reply “Fine, thanks. And you?” when greeting others. So, I was very surprised when an American teenager asked me, “What’s up?”

At first, I didn’t know how to respond. Should I say, “The sky” or “The clouds”? He didn’t want me to look up above him, did he? So, I just went with my **standard** reply: “Fine, thanks. And you?”

This American **teen** seemed amazed by my answer because it didn’t make sense. However, he was patient enough to explain to me that the phrase “What’s up?” was another way to ask, “What’s going on?” “Most people just answer ‘Nothing’ or ‘Not much’,” he said.

Also, there can be a big difference between the *literal* and the actual meanings of many *colloquial* phrases. For example, I had learned in Taiwan that the phrase “Shut up!” was a forceful way to tell someone to stop talking. I also knew that this **command** was considered impolite and even rude. So, I was **stunned** when an American girl said this to me.

“I eat *mangoes* every day in Taiwan during the summer,” I was telling her.

“Shut up!” she said.

I hadn't **expected** to hear that. As a result, I **blushed** with embarrassment and immediately stopped talking. Had I been **boasting**? Had I offended her?

Seeing my strange behavior, she then asked me, "What's wrong? Why did you become so silent, out of the blue?"

"You told me to shut up," I said, on the verge of tears, "so I did."

The American girl *chuckled* and said, "You didn't actually think that I meant for you to shut up, did you?" She went on to tell me that "Shut up!" is used by young Americans today to express **astonishment**. "It is similar to 'No way!' or 'Get out of here!'," she added.

Though it was **confusing** at times, my summer in the United States taught me a lot. I learned that language is very **flexible**. Sometimes a phrase does not have a very **strict** meaning. So, when I got off the airport bus to catch my **flight** back to Taiwan and the bus driver said to me, "Have a good one!", I didn't **attempt** to ask him to **clarify** if "a good one" meant a good day, a good trip, or even a good life. I just smiled back and said, "You, too!"

—by Ted Pigott

A Song to Help the World

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In 2010, several countries were affected by major **earthquakes**. *Indonesia*, *Mexico*, and *Chile* experienced a great deal of **pain** and **loss** because of the earthquakes. However, the most **tragic** situation occurred in *Haiti*. On January 12, a powerful earthquake **struck** this country and wiped out much of its **capital**, *Port-au-Prince*. It took nature only a few seconds to change millions of people's lives **forever**.

Port-au-Prince was like hell on earth. Over 200,000 people died, and more than a million others lost their homes and businesses. **Survivors** were left without food or clean water, and they faced the **threat** of **diseases** and **thieves**. What was worse, the **government** was unable to help its people because many government **officials** had been killed and their offices had been turned into **piles** of broken *bricks* in the disaster.

It didn't take the **artists** in the United States much time to decide to help Haiti. A group of well-known artists got together to re-**record** the **charity single** "We Are the World." This **classic** song, written by *Michael Jackson* and *Lionel Richie*, was originally recorded in 1985. At that time, the song was used to raise money for the poor in Africa. Now, the new **version** of the song is meant to help the people in Haiti. This new single contains a *rap* section, and it still keeps Michael Jackson's part to show respect for the superstar. After all, if he hadn't written the original song, the new version might never have been recorded.

The deeper meaning of "We Are the World" is to **remind** us that *human beings* are one big family. When other people are suffering, we should come to their **rescue**. By offering help to others, our lives can become more meaningful and joyful. Moreover, the world will become a better place for the **entire** *human race*.

—by Jason Grenier

The World on a Plate

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Visitors to *Scotland* are often **tempted** to try a Scottish national dish called *haggis*. Haggis is a boiled sheep's stomach that is **stuffed** with a sheep's *lungs*, liver, and heart. Although it is thought of as a *delicacy* by the locals, some visitors are not so sure about this. If you go to Scotland, will you **dare** to eat this dish?

Food is an important part of any travel experience, and nothing helps develop friendships or business relationships like sharing a meal. As a matter of fact, if you are not willing to try the local food when you travel, you will miss the **opportunity** to know more about the culture there. Most people who travel **frequently** realize that trying the local food is not only a great way to show respect for the **host**, but also an **essential** part of experiencing a different culture.

You may have difficulty eating *exotic cuisine*, but it is *diplomatic* to take a bite of everything that is being served to you in order not to offend the locals. As a frequent traveler, I never turn down any chance to experience a foreign culture through its food. During my travels, I have eaten a lot of **weird** food. In *Saudi Arabia*, I have tasted sheep's eyeballs, which are served to the guest of honor. In Africa, I have tried *caterpillars*, which are important **sources** of *protein* for millions of people there. In Indonesia, I have eaten fried frog legs, which are not as tasty as chicken, but **otherwise** pretty similar. In China, I have tried a kind of boiled fish. It was so **spicy** that I felt like it could burn a hole in my *tongue*. In *South Korea*, I have eaten live *octopus*—the octopus almost **stuck** to my throat when I **swallowed** it. Eating these dishes has not always been easy for me, but it has **contributed** greatly to my travels and given me **terrific** stories to tell back home!

As for my advice for travelers who are unsure about eating strange food, the most important thing to remember is never to offend the hosts.

Here are a few **tips** for making it easier to try foreign food. First of all, don't ask what the food is before you try it. Very often, the food you consider weird is probably delicious—it is the thought rather than the taste that **spoils** your **appetite**. Second, take small bites, or if you are serving yourself, just take a small *helping*. Trying a small **amount** of everything first is wiser than filling your plate with a lot of food. Finally, if you have trouble swallowing something, just take a sip of your drink. This can help **disguise** the unfamiliar taste.

When you travel overseas, remember that you are representing your country. If you try some of the local food, you'll probably make friends for both yourself and your country.

—by Toni Jordan