

## Cockney Rhyming Slang



**SOOT:** *Well, what do ya want me to do? Tell a porky pie?*

**STELLA:** *A what?*

**SOOT:** *A lie! Never heard Cockney rhyming slang?*

Sometimes known as ‘London’s secret language’, Cockney Rhyming Slang is more of a dialect - a collection of phrases used by Cockneys (someone born within the sound of the bells of St Mary-le-Bow Church in London’s East End), and other Londoners.

Dating from the mid nineteenth century, it is popularly believed to have originated amongst market traders to allow them to talk amongst themselves in front of customers. Another theory is that it was developed to intentionally confuse non-locals and build a sense of community. Others believe it was started as a method of secret communication amongst criminals. But whatever its origins, it is a form of language still used today, although more commonly heard now in the outer London boroughs and the suburbs.

Rhyming slang phrases are made by replacing a word with an expression that rhymes with it – for example ‘Look’ becomes ‘Butchers hook’. Very often the rhyming word is also missed out too so ‘Have a look’ becomes ‘Have a butchers’.

Meaning	Slang Word	Original Phrase
telephone	dog	dog-and-bone

wife	trouble	trouble-and-strife
eyes	mincers	mince pies
wig	syrup	syrup of figs
feet	plates	plates of meat

Soot introduces Stella to several well known cockney Rhyming slang phrases:

**SOOT:** *I bin hidin' meself away for donkey's*

**STELLA:** *Donkey's?*

**SOOT:** *Donkey's ears, Years!*

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**STELLA:** *So how did you end up...*

**SOOT:** *Brown bread?*

**STELLA:** *Brown bread rhymes with....dead*

**SOOT:** *You're getting it.*

Below is a table of some well known Cockney Rhyming slang phrases and their meanings:

Apples and pears		Stairs
Ayrton	Ayrton Senna	Tenner (10 pound note)
Barnet	Barnet Fair	Hair
Boat	Boat Race	Face
Bread	Bread and Honey	Money

Brown Bread		Dead
Bull and Cow		Row (argument)
(Have a) butcher's	Butcher's Hook	Look
(My old) China	China Plate	Mate
Crackered (or creamed)	Cream Crackered	Knackered (tired)
Crust	Crust of Bread	Head
Current Bun		Sun (newspaper)
Daisy roots		Boots
Dog and Bone		Phone
Donkey's	Donkey's Ears	Years
Frog and toad		Road
Gregory	Gregory Peck	Neck
Hampsteads	Hampstead Heath	Teeth
Lardy	La-di-da	Cigar
Loaf	Loaf of Bread	Head
Mincies	Mince pies	Eyes
Mutton	Mutt and Jeff	Deaf
North and South		Mouth
Oxford Scholar		Dollar
On your Pat	Pat Malone	Alone
Pen and Ink		Stink
Plates	Plates of Meat	Feet
Taters	Potatoes in the mould	Cold
Rabbit	Rabbit and Pork	Talk
Rosie	Rosie Lee	Tea

Ruby	Ruby Murray	Curry
Syrup	Syrup of Figs	Wig
Tea Leaf		Thief
Titfer	Tit for tat	Hat
Trouble and Strife		Wife
Weasel	Weasel and Stoat	Coat

### **Exercise 1**

Translate the following sentences:

*'Last night I got on the dog and bone to my old china, Ted, - we're going down the frog and toad tomorrow for a ruby'*

*'Feast your mincies on those daisy roots she's wearing, bet they cost more than an ayrton!'*

*'My trouble and strife has gone into town to get her hampsteads seen to by the dentist'*

*'I'm glad I've got my weasel today, it's taters out there!'*

### **Exercise 2**

In pairs, imagine you are two Cockneys meeting at a bus stop. Using the table above, see how many rhyming slang phrases you can get into your conversation.

### **Exercise 3**

Try inventing your own rhyming slang phrases for these words:

Dinner, Telly, Butter, Shoe, Bath, Car.

Can you make up some of your own?