

## FOREIGN WORDS AND PHRASES IN ENGLISH

English vocabulary abounds with many foreign words and phrases. They are borrowed into the language to express things, ideas and concepts, which cannot otherwise be aptly, conveyed using native words or phrases.

Some are totally assimilated into the vocabulary, for example, *violin* and *macaroni* from Italian, and *alligator* and *tomato* from Spanish. Others, while fully part of the vocabulary, retain the pronunciation, spelling or grammatical ending of the original language, for example, *Grand Prix* (French), *karaoke* (Japanese) and *phenomena* (Latin).

### STUDY TIPS

When using foreign words or phrases in spoken or written English it is important they are used correctly and are stylistically appropriate.

Foreign words can make your speech or writing sound casual or more sophisticated, or excessively formal and artificial, if used incorrectly.

English borrows from many languages of the world, examples of which are examined in further in the notes below.

### Foreign words, phrases and expressions

It is not uncommon in English speech and writing, both formal and informal, to come across **foreign words, phrases and expressions**, given the extent people travel, mass communication, migration, foreign exchange programs, colonisation etc. These borrowings make English vocabulary rich and diverse. The vocabulary of English is increasing by thousands of new words each year as words and concepts are taken from other languages.

The table that follows is a list of the more commonly used foreign words, phrases and expressions.

Foreign word, phrase or expression	Origin, word form, pronunciation	Meaning
a cappella	Italian, adjective/adverb /ə kə'pɛlə/	to sing without the accompaniment of musical instruments
ad hoc	Latin, adjective/adverb, formal /əd 'hɒk/	something that is not planned, but rather organised or arranged when necessary
aficionado aficionados (plural)	Spanish, noun /ə'fɪʃiə'nado/	someone who has an interest in and is quite knowledgeable about a particular subject or activity



# STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

Foreign word, phrase or expression	Origin, word form, pronunciation	Meaning
à la carte	French, adjective/adverb /a la 'kat/	menu which allows you to choose individually priced dishes
à la mode	French, adjective/adverb /a la 'moʊd/	something that is in fashion
alma mater	Latin, noun /ælmə 'matə/	the school or university you attended
angst	German, noun (uncountable) /æŋst/	feelings of anxiety and worry because of uncertainties in the life and future
apparatchik	Russian, noun /apə'raʊk/	government or party official who obeys orders
a priori	Latin, adjective/adverb, formal /e'pri'ri/	an argument or reason which is based on general principles
apropos	French, adverb, formal /æprə'oʊ/	with reference to, in respect of
au fait	French, adjective /oʊ 'feɪ/	familiar or acquainted with
au naturel	French, adjective /oʊ nə'ætʃrəl/	in a natural state or form, uncooked, naked
blasé	French, adjective /bla'zeɪ/	being uninterested in, unimpressed with or indifferent to something
blitz	German, noun /blɪts/	a surprise and sudden attack
bona fide	Latin, adjective /boʊnə 'faɪdi/	real, genuine, true
bon appetit	French, interjection /bɒn æpə'ti/	enjoy your meal
bon vivant bon viveur	French, noun, formal /bɒ̃ vi'vɑ̃/	someone who indulges in good food and wine, and lives well
bon voyage	French, interjection /bɒ̃ vɔʒ'jaʒ/	used to wish someone a pleasant journey, trip
boomerang	Australian aboriginal, noun /'bʊməɾæŋ/	a curved piece of timber when thrown returns full circle
carte blanche	French, noun /kat 'blɑ̃nʃ/	permission to do as you please
c'est la vie	French, interjection /sɛ la 'vi/	that's life
chilli con carne	Spanish, noun /'tʃɪli kɒn 'kɑːni/	a spicy meat dish with beans and chillies



# STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

Foreign word, phrase or expression	Origin, word form, pronunciation	Meaning
ciao	Italian, interjection informal /tʃaʊ/	to say hello or goodbye
cliché	French, noun /'kli:ʃeɪ/	an idea or phrase which is overused and ineffective
cordons bleu	French, adjective /'kɔ:dn 'blu:/	describes a cook or cookery of the highest quality or standard
cosmonaut	Russian, noun /'kɔ:zmən/	astronaut
coup	French, noun /ku:/	overthrowing a government and seizing power
crème de la crème	French, noun /'krɛm də la 'krɛm/	the very best of something
cul-de-sac	French, noun /'kʌl-də-sæk/	street or road which is closed at one end
curriculum vitae curricula vitae (plural)	Latin, noun /'kʌrɪkjələm 'vitaɪ/	a brief description of your career, work experience etc.
de facto	Latin, adjective /də 'fæktə/	actually existing but not legally
déjà vu	French, noun /de:ʒə 'vu/	the feeling of having experienced something before but in fact it wasn't experienced
détente	French, noun /de:'tɛnt/	Friendly relations between countries where previously relations were tense and problematic
en bloc	French, adverb /ən'blɒk/	as a single unit
encore	French, interjection /'ɔ:ŋkə/	repetition of a song or music because the audience requests it
en route	French, adverb /ən 'ru:t/	on the way
entourage	French, noun /ɛntu'reɪ/	a group of people or assistants who travel with a famous or important person
eureka	Greek, interjection /ju:'ri:kə/	expression used to show how happy you are because you've finally solved a problem or realised something
ex gratia	Latin, adjective, formal /ɛks 'grɛ:ʃiə/	a payment which is made as a gift or as a favour
ex officio	Latin, adjective, formal /ɛks ə'fɪ:ʃiə/	a rank or privilege because of their position

Foreign word, phrase	Origin, word form,	Meaning
----------------------	--------------------	---------



# STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

or expression	pronunciation	
fait accompli	French, noun /feɪt əkɒm'pli/	Something which has already been done and has to remain as is
fatwa	Arabic, noun /fætwa/	a religious order issued by an Islamic leader
faux pas	French, noun /'foʊ pa/	an embarrassing mistake or inappropriate behaviour in a social situation
glasnost	Russian, noun /glæznɒst/	a policy allowing openness in government
gnocchi	Italian, noun /'nɒki/	small round or square dumplings
gourmet	French, noun /'gɒmə/	food which is exceptionally good and usually expensive
Grand Prix Grands Prix (plural)	French, noun /grɑ̃ 'pri/	a series of international races, especially motor-racing
gratis	Latin, adverb /'gratəs/	free
harakiri	Japanese, noun /hærə'kɪri/	killing oneself by cutting open the stomach to avoid dishonour
hoist	Dutch, noun /hɔɪst/	equipment used to lift heavy objects
in camera	Latin, adjective /ɪn 'kæməərə/	in private
in toto	Latin, adverb /ɪn 'tɒtɒ/	in all; totally
kamikaze	Japanese, adjective /kæmə'kazi/	someone who willingly takes a risk knowing they are endangering themselves
karaoke	Japanese, noun /kæri'oʊki/	a form of entertainment in which a machine plays songs to which people sing the words
kitsch	German, noun /kɪtʃ/	something which is of poor quality, worthless and showy
la dolce vita	Italian, noun /la 'dɒlsə 'vitə/	the good life
laissez-faire laissez-faire	French, noun /leɪ'seɪz 'fɛə/	non-interference; allowing things to act of their own accord
lasagne (Australian and British English) lasagna (North American English)	Italian, noun /lə'sanjə/	flat pieces of pasta
lychee	Chinese, noun /laɪ'tʃi/	a small round piece of fruit with sweet white flesh inside
<b>Foreign word, phrase or expression</b>	<b>Origin, word form, pronunciation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>



# STUDY ENGLISH

## IELTS PREPARATION

macho	Spanish, adjective, informal /'mæʊo/	a man who emphasises his masculinity, aggressiveness, bravery etc.
modus operandi	Latin, noun, formal /moʊdəs ɒpə'reændi/	the way someone operates/works
nouveau riche	French, adjective /nuvoʊ 'ri/	someone who has recently acquired wealth but not manners or good taste
persona non grata	Latin, noun, formal /pəsoʊnə nɒn 'gratə/	someone who is not welcome
pièce de résistance	French, noun /pi:s də rə'zɪstəns/	something which is the best
putsch	German, noun /pʊʃ/	removing a government forcefully
rattan	Malay, noun /rə'tæn/	furniture which is made from the stems of a plant grown in South East Asia
rigor mortis	Latin, noun /rɪgə 'mɔ:təs/	the condition whereby a body becomes stiff after death
sashimi	Japanese, noun /sæ'ɪmi/	small pieces of raw fresh fish
sheikh	Arabic, noun /ʃeɪk/	an Arab ruler or a Muslim religious leader
sushi	Japanese, noun /'sʊʃi/	small cakes of prepared rice and raw fish or vegetables
tête-à-tête	French, noun /teɪt-a-'teɪt/	a conversation between two people, usually private
thug	Hindi, noun /θʊg/	a person who is violent
tiramisu	Italian, noun /tɪrami'su/	literally means 'pick-me-up'; layered cake with coffee and cream
touché	French, interjection /tu'ʃeɪ/	acknowledging a good point/remark that your opponent has made
tycoon	Japanese, noun /ta'kʊn/	a successful businessman with power and money