

Hell hath no fury like a woman with corns



language lab

Language is the dress of thought. Look sharp baby.

I love words. I love the way they look and sound. And I love the way they feel and smell and taste. Oops. Thinking about new tires again.

This space is dedicated to words and wordplay: anagrams, hidden words, crossword puzzles, palindromes and useful, real-world interlingual translation exercises.

### Using Dutch to Tone Speech-Related Muscles

Learning a foreign language usually requires students to form new and often difficult sounds. Nothing helps better prepare one for that challenge than loosening up the facial muscles.

The Dutch language's combination of long, lilting, exaggerated sounds and plosive and guttural phonemes is in itself a substantial physical workout. In fact, Dr. Keith Martin has compared the Dutch language to "speaking English and German simultaneously, while eating potato chips and not breathing."



"Young Man Practicing Dutch"  
Adriaen Brouwer, ca. 1635

Practicing certain Dutch words also is a good way to limber up if you:

1. Plan to become a professional auctioneer
2. Are pursuing a job as a yodeler
3. Want to be able to stretch your lips over your entire head to impress people at parties

Here's my short-list of the most useful sounds and practice phrases:

4:

Say the word "Fiiit" with lips rounded as though you were saying "ooo." Stick out your chin, raise your eyebrows and imagine yourself passing a kidney stone.

**Practice phrase:**

[illegible]

**uu:**

Make the "oooo" sound as you would normally, but close your puckered lips to the smallest possible opening. If your facial muscles go into lactic acid-producing anaerobic metabolism and completely lock up, stop immediately and apply a warm compress.

**Practice phrase:**

Huuder blecht.

**aa:**

This sound is very subtle: like the "a" in "father" with just a hint of the "ar" in "Harvard." Try and imagine the sound a pirate would make immediately after receiving a smart paddle blow to the shins.

**Practice phrase:**

Faaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaarrrrrrnen hoffer ploppen.

**Gutturals:**

Imagine spitting out a mouthful of ground bark chips while gagging on a hair stuck in your throat. Or, simply try to pronounce all consonants simultaneously while drinking a glass of water.

**Practice phrase:**

Vrij degelijk ontdekt zegt verschrikkelijkste!

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### Employer/Employee-Speak: Reading Between The Lines

Surviving in the workplace requires diplomacy: withholding the words you'd really like to say *and* being able to detect what the other party actually means as you exchange pleasantries.

Here's a brief guide to the hidden meaning behind some common, day-to-day workplace phrases.



**Boss says:**

You are a valuable team member.

**Boss means:**

Happy you do all the heavy lifting so I can nap in my office.

**Employee says:**

I feel privileged to work here.

**Employee means:**

Free office supplies *and* I sleep with your wife!

**Boss says:**

I know I can count on you.

**Boss means:**

Pleeease give me an excuse to sack you.

**Employee says:**

I won't let you down.

**Employee means:**

I'm glad I told you the task would take me 7 times longer than it actually will.

**Boss says:**

Can you work a couple of extra hours tonight?

**Boss means:**

I screwed off all day, but I do have a hot date.

**Employee says:**

I wish I could but my child/spouse/parent/sibling is sick.

**Employee means:**

I am *not* going to bail you out again, you incompetent goober.

**Boss says:**

Hey, I just realized that reviews are approaching!

**Boss means:**

Time for a little extra sucking-up you lowly serf.

**Employee says:**

Wow. Already?

**Employee means:**

Cool. You'll receive this company's first negative number boss rating.

**Boss says:**

I think we need to have a meeting.

**Boss means:**

I'm Jonesing for doughnuts. Someone pick up a couple dozen beauties.

**Employee says:**

Okay. I'll get the doughnuts.

**Employee means:**

Hopefully, the 7th one you eat will clog your arteries solid.

**Boss says:**

I am going to lunch.

**Boss means:**

I am going to sneak off to a bar to help deal with the fact that I have to work with you.

**Employee says:**

Okay. See you in an hour.

**Employee means:**

I am going to sneak off to a bar to help deal with the fact that I have to work with you.

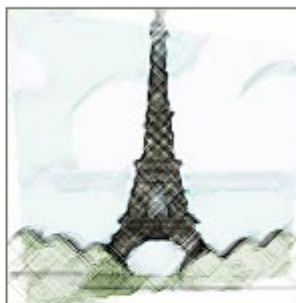
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## Really useful French phrases for students

Here are some useful French phrases I put together while in college and preparing for a visit to France's esteemed École Polytechnique.

They still work today, as academia never really changes.

If you have trouble with the French nasal sounds, try pumping Jell-O into your sinus cavities. Unflavored is the least likely to cause infection.



**English:** Might you know how much Prof. Jones charges for an "A?"

**French:** Sauriez-vous combien le Prof. Jones demande pour un "A?"

**English:** Would you mind throwing up *outside* my room?

**French:** Veuillez avoir la bonté de vomir *en dehors* ma chambre?

**English:** Aren't you the girl who was doing the backstroke in the vat of beer at wild Ralph's party last week?

**French:** N'êtes-vous pas la fille qui faisait la brasse sur le dos dans la cuve de bière à la boum de Raoul le bizarre la semaine dernière?

**English:** I'm afraid that we don't have room for a pet alligator.

**French:** C'est dommage que nous n'ayons pas de place pour un crocodile familial.

**English:** Yes, I'm sure that the \$47 call on the phone bill is yours.

**French:** Oul, je certain que ce tarif de \$47 dans la note est le vôtre.

**English:** If you insist on talking about your date with Bif during this test review, I will be forced to stuff my daypack into your mouth.

**French:** Si vous insistez à parler de votre rendez-vous avec Bif pendant cette révision d'examen, je serai obligé d'enfoncer mon sac à livres dans votre bouche.

**English:** Your cute little kitty just retched up all over my 300 page thesis.

**French:** Votre petit chaton adorable vient de regorger sur toute ma thèse de 300 pages.

**English:** I'll have a bit of the blue meat with the green sauce.

**French:** Je voudrais un peu de cette viande bleue à la sauce verte.