



Foreign Words and Phrases used in English

The English meanings given below are not necessarily literal translations. Foreign words and phrases should be set in italics if their meanings are likely to be unknown to the reader. Whether the expression is familiar or unfamiliar, however, is a matter of judgment. Below, all foreign words have been italicized for the sake of emphasis.

ad absurdum

(ad ab-sir'dum) [Lat.]: to the point of absurdity. "He tediously [öde, zäh, langweilig] repeated his argument *ad absurdum*."

ad infinitum

(ad in-fun-eye'tum) [Lat.]: to infinity. "The lecture seemed to drone on *ad infinitum*."

ad nauseam

(ad noz'ee-um) [Lat.]: to a sickening degree. "The politician uttered one platitude after another *ad nauseam*."

aficionado

(uh-fish'ya-nah'doh) [Span.]: an ardent [leidenschaftlich, vehement] devotee. "I was surprised at what a baseball *aficionado* she had become."

annus mirabilis

(an'us muh-ra'buh-lis) [Lat.]: wonderful year. "Last year was the *annus mirabilis* for my company."

a priori

(ah pree or'ee) [Lat.]: based on theory rather than observation. "The fact that their house is in such disrepair suggests *a priori* that they are having financial difficulties."

au courant

(oh' koo-rah'n') [Fr.]: up-to-date. "The shoes, the hair, the clothes—every last detail of her dress, in fact—was utterly *au courant*."

beau geste

(boh zhest') [Fr.]: a fine or noble gesture, often futile [vergebens, nutzlos, sinnlos]. "My fellow writers supported me by writing letters of protest to the publisher, but their *beau geste* could not prevent the inevitable."

beau monde

(boh' mond') [Fr.]: high society. "Such elegant decor would impress even the *beau monde*."

bête noire

(bet nwahr') [Fr.]: something or someone particularly disliked. "Talk of the good old college days way back had become his *bête noire*, and he began to avoid his school friends."

bona fide

(boh'na fide) [Lat.]: in good faith; genuine. "He bought the car *bona fide*, not knowing that it was stolen."; "For all her reticence [Zurückhaltung, Wortkargheit, Schüchternheit] and modesty [Bescheidenheit], it was clear that she was a *bona fide* expert in her field."

bon mot

(bon moe') [Fr.]: a witty remark or comment. "One *bon mot* after another flew out of his mouth, charming the audience."

bon vivant

(bon vee-vahnt') [Fr.]: a person who lives luxuriously and enjoys good food and drink. "It's true he's quite the *bon vivant*, but when he gets down to business he conducts himself like a Spartan."

carpe diem

(kar'pay dee'um) [Lat.]: seize the day. "So what if you have an 8:00 a.m. meeting tomorrow and a full day of appointments? *Carpe diem!*"

carte blanche

(kart blonsh') [Fr.]: unrestricted power to act on one's own. "I may have *carte blanche* around the office, but at home I'm a slave to my family's demands."

cause célèbre

(koz suh-leb'ruh) [Fr.]: a widely known controversial case or issue. "The Sacco and Vanzetti trial became an international *cause célèbre* during the 1920s."

caveat emptor

(kav'ee-ot emp'tor) [Lat.]: let the buyer beware. "Before you jump to that real estate deal, *caveat emptor!*" [auch Ausschluss der Gewährleistung]

comme ci comme ça

(kom see' kom sah') [Fr.]: so-so. "The plans for the party strike me as *comme ci comme ça*."

comme il faut

(kom eel foe') [Fr.]: as it should be; fitting. "His end was truly *comme il faut*."

coup de grâce

(koo de grahss') [Fr.]: finishing blow. "After an already wildly successful day, the *coup de grâce* came when she won best all-around athlete."

cri de coeur

(kree' de kur') [Fr.]: heartfelt appeal. "About to leave the podium, he made a final *cri de coeur* to his people to end the bloodshed."

de rigueur

(duh ree-gur') [Fr.]: strictly required, as by etiquette, usage, or fashion. "Loudly proclaiming one's support for radical causes had become *de rigueur* among the crowd."

deus ex machina

(day'us ex mahk'uh-nuh) [Lat.]: a contrived [gestellt, gekünstelt] device to resolve a situation. "Stretching plausibility, the movie concluded with a *deus ex machina* ending in which everyone was rescued at the last minute."

dolce vita

(dole'chay vee'tuh) [Ital.]: sweet life; the good life perceived as one of physical pleasure and self-indulgence. "My vacation this year is going to be two uninterrupted weeks of *dolce vita*."

Doppelgänger

(dop'pul-gang-ur) [Ger.]: a ghostly double or counterpart of a living person. "I could not shake the sense that some shadowy *Doppelgänger* echoed my every move."

ecce homo

(ek'ee ho'mo) [Lat.]: behold/see/look at the man. "The painting depicted the common Renaissance theme, *ecce homo*—Christ wearing the crown of thorns."

enfant terrible

(ahn-fahn' tay-reeb'luh) [Fr.]: an incorrigible child; an outrageously outspoken or bold person. "He played the role of *enfant terrible*, jolting us with his blunt assessment."

entre nous

(ahn'truh noo') [Fr.]: between ourselves; confidentially. "*Entre nous*, their marriage is on the rocks."

ex cathedra

(ex kuh-thee'druh) [Lat.]: with authority; used especially of those pronouncements of the pope that are considered infallible. "I resigned myself to obeying; my father's opinions were *ex cathedra* in our household."

ex post facto

(ex' post fak'toh) [Lat.]: retroactively. "I certainly hope that the change in policy will be honored *ex post facto*."

fait accompli

(fate ah-kom-plee') [Fr.]: an accomplished fact, presumably irreversible. "There's no use protesting—it's a *fait accompli*."

faux pas

(foh pah') [Fr.]: a social blunder. "Suddenly, she realized she had unwillingly committed yet another *faux pas*."

Feinschmecker

(fine'shmek-er) [Ger.]: gourmet. "No, I don't think McDonald's will do; he's much too much of a *Feinschmecker*."

glasnost

(glaz'nohst) [Rus.]: open and frank discussion: initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 in the

Soviet Union. "Once the old chairman retired, the spirit of *glasnost* pervaded the department."

hoi polloi

(hoy' puh-loy') [Gk.]: the common people. "Marie Antoinette recommended cake to the *hoi polloi*."

inflagranti

(infla-grahn'tee) [Lat.]: in the act. "The detective realized that without hard evidence he had no case; he would have to catch the culprit [der/den Schuldige/n] *inflagranti*."

in loco parentis

(in loh'koh pa-ren'tiss) [Lat.]: in the place of a parent. "The court appointed a guardian for the children, to serve *in loco parentis*."

in situ

(in sit'too) [Lat.]: situated in the original or natural position. "I prefer seeing statues *in situ* rather than in the confines of a museum."

in vino veritas

(in vee'no vare'i-toss) [Lat.]: in wine there is truth. "By the end of the drunken banquet, several of the guests had made a good deal of their private lives public, prompting the host to murmur to his wife, '*in vino veritas*.'"

ipso facto

(ip'soh fak'toh) [Lat.]: by the fact itself. "An extremist, *ipso facto*, cannot become part of a coalition."

je ne sais quoi

(zhun say kwah') [Fr.]: I know not what; an elusive [schwer fassbar] quality. "She couldn't explain it, but there was something *je ne sais quoi* about him that she found devastatingly [unwiderstehlich] attractive."

mano a mano

(mah'no ah mah'no) [Span.]: a direct confrontation or conflict. "'Stay out of it,' he admonished his friends, 'I want to handle this guy *mano a mano*.'"

mea culpa

(may'uh kul'puh) [Lat.]: I am to blame. "His *mea culpa* was so offhand that I hardly think he meant it."

memento mori

(muh-men'toh more'ee) [Lat.]: a) a reminder that you must die, b) think of the dead ones. "The skull rested on the mantelpiece as a *memento mori*."

modus operandi

(moh'dus op-er-an'dee) [Lat.]: a method of operating. "Her *modus operandi* is to sugarcoat the truth so thoroughly that the news almost seems welcome."

mot juste

(moh zhoost') [Fr.]: the exact, appropriate word. "'Rats!' screamed the defiant [vorlaut] three-year-old, immensely proud of his *mot juste*."

non plus ultra

(non plus ul'truh) [Lat.]: the most intense degree of a quality or state. "Pulling it from the box, he realized he was face to face with the *non plus ultra* of computers."

nom de guerre

(nom duh gair') [Fr.]: pseudonym; a name that someone uses instead of their real name, especially someone who is fighting in a war. "He went by his *nom de guerre* when frequenting trendy nightclubs."

nom de plume

(nom duh ploom') [Fr.]: pen name. "Deciding it was time to sit down and begin a novel, the would-be writer spent the first several hours deciding upon a suitably dashing *nom de plume*."

nota bene

(noh'tuh ben'nee) [Ital.]: note well; take notice. "She appended her suggestions to the manuscript, underlining the words *nota bene* for added emphasis."

persona non grata

(per-soh'nuh non grah'tuh) [Lat.]: unacceptable or unwelcome person. "Once I was cut out of the will, I became *persona non grata* among my relatives."

pro bono

(pro boh'noh) [Lat.]: done or donated without charge; free. "The lawyer's *pro bono* work gave him a sense of value that his work on behalf of the corporation could not."

quid pro quo

(kwid' pro kwoh') [Lat.]: something for something; an equal exchange. "She vowed that when she had the means, she would return his favors *quid pro quo*."

sans souci

(sahn soo-see') [Fr.]: carefree. "Their mood was definitely *sans souci*."

savoir-faire

(sav'wahr fair') [Fr.]: the ability to say and do the correct thing. "She presided over the gathering with impressive *savoir-faire*."

sic transit gloria mundi

(sick tran'sit glor'ee-uh mun'dee) [Lat.]: thus passes away the glory of the world. "Watching the aging former football quarterback lumber down the street, potbellied and dissipated, his friend shook his head in disbelief and muttered, '*sic transit gloria mundi*.'"

sine qua non

(sin'ay kwah nohn') [Lat.]: indispensable. "Lemon is the *sine qua non* of this recipe."

terra incognita

(tare'uh in-kog-nee'tuh) [Lat.]: unknown territory. "When the conversation suddenly switched from contemporary fiction to medieval Albanian playwrights, he felt himself entering *terra incognita*."

tout le monde

(too luh mond') [Fr.]: everybody; everyone of importance. "Don't miss the event; it's bound to be attended by *tout le monde*."

veni, vidi, vici

(ven'ee vee'dee vee'chee) [Lat.]: I came, I saw, I conquered. "After the takeover the business mogul gloated, '*veni, vidi, vici*.'"

verboten

(fer-boh'ten) [Ger.]: forbidden, as by law; prohibited. "That topic, I am afraid, is *verboten* in this household."

vox populi

(voks pop'yoo-lie) [Lat.]: the voice of the people. "My sentiments echo those of the *vox populi*."

Wanderjahr

(vahn'der-yahr) [Ger.]: a year or period of travel, especially following one's schooling. "The trio took off on their *Wanderjahr* soon after they graduated, planning to circle the globe by bicycle."

Weltanschauung

(velt'an-shou'ung) [Ger.]: a comprehensive conception or image of the universe and of humanity's relation to it. "His *Weltanschauung* gradually metamorphized from a grim and pessimistic one to a sunny, but no less complex, view."

Weltschmerz

(velt'shmerts) [Ger.]: sorrow over the evils of the world. "His poetry expressed a certain *Weltschmerz*, or world-weariness."

Zeitgeist

(zite'guyst) [Ger.]: the spirit of the time; general trend of thought or feeling characteristic of a particular period of time. "She blamed it on the *Zeitgeist*, which encouraged hedonistic excess."