

# Kiwi Words and Phrases



Even if you are a native English speaker you will find that how we speak English here may be quite different. Here is a dictionary of words and expressions commonly used in New Zealand with their equivalent definition. Many words and phrases listed here are common to both New Zealand, Great Britain and Australia but it is designed as a helpful insight. These words and phrases have been gleaned from many sources.

**ads:** TV commercials, adverts

**A & P Show:** usually a 3 or 4 day event where farmers strut their stuff and win prizes for best cow, largest onion, best pikelet etc. Often has sideshows for the townies, with ferris wheels, dodgems and such like. (A&P = Agricultural & Pastoral)

**arse:** rear end, butt

**banger:** sausage

**bach:** small holiday home, pronounced "batch 11"

**beaut:** great; good fun; "that'll be beaut mate"

**bit of a dag:** **hard case;** comedian; joker

**biscuit:** cookie

**bloke:** usually a man, and often used when referring to a stranger as in; "There's this bloke down the road who sells greasies from his pie-cart for \$1 a bag, which is much cheaper than that bloke who has a shop", or used when referring to someone you like, as in; "That bloke, Joe Blow, is a really nice guy once you get to know him".

**blow me down:** expression of surprise, as in; "Well! Blow me down, I didn't know that."

**bludge:** to sponge off others; as in "dole bludger"

**Bob's your Uncle:** roughly translates to 'there ya go- that's all there is to it!' Just press this big red button that says 'Launch Missile', and "Bob's your uncle".

**bonk:** to have sex with

**bonnet:** car hood

**boohai:** awry; out of the way non-existent place. As in "up the boohai shooting pukeko's

with a long-handled shovel": said in response to "Where are you going?" and meaning "Mind your own business" or "I'm just wandering around"

**boot:** car trunk

**box of budgies:** cheerful, happy, very good

**boxing day:** the day after Christmas Day. This word comes from the custom which started in the Middle Ages around 800 years ago: churches would open their 'alms boxes' (boxes in which people had placed gifts of money) and distribute the contents to poor people in the neighbourhood on the day after Christmas. The tradition continues today.

**boy-racer:** Young hoon in fast car with unbelievably loud stereo!

**braces:** suspenders

**brassed off:** disappointed, annoyed

**brekkie:** Short for 'breakfast'

**brickie:** bricklayer. From JI

**brilliant:** excellent; great; wonderful

**bugalugs:** a bit like "mate" as in "how's it going bugalugs"

**bugger all:** not much, very little; as in "I know bugger

all I buggered: exhausted

**bugger off:** piss off, shove off, get out

**bum:** rear end, butt

**bumper:** fender

**bun-fight:** social gathering with food  
**bun in the oven:** pregnant (also see)

**bush:** small and large trees and native plants densely packed together - sort of like a small forest.

**bust a gut:** make an intense effort  
**cackhanded:** left handed, southpaw  
**candyfloss:** cottoncandy

**capsicum:** green pepper  
**car park:** parking lot

**caravan:** trailer, mobile home

**cardy:** woollen button-up-the-front jersey (also cardie)

**arked it:** died, kicked the bucket  
**chips:** french fries

**cheers:** goodbye or thanks or good luck. From JT

**chemist:** pharmacy, drug store. Also a euphemism for druggist.  
**cheque:** check

**cheerio:** good bye

**chilly bin:** sealable, usually polystyrene insulated box, for keeping beer & food cold  
**chips:** french fries

**chippy:** builder, carpenter

**choc-a-block:** full to overflowing

**chocolate fish:** a chocolate covered marshmallow fish. Also frequently given (literally or figuratively) as a reward for a job well done; as in "Good on ya, mate. You deserve a chocolate fish". From JT

**choice:** very good  
**chook:** chicken  
**chrissy:** Christmas

**chuffed:** pleased; as in "he was dead chuffed"

**chunder:** to vomit

**cods wollop:** untrue statement or remark is referred to as a "load of lod cods wollop".

**colly wobbles:** a feeling of nausea usually associated with nervousness; as in "bungee jumping gave me a dose of the collywobbles"

**corker:** very good  
**cornflour:** cornstarch  
**cotton buds:** Q-tips  
**courgette:** zucchini

**cracker:** very good. See also wee cracker

**crib:** small holiday home  
**crikey dick!:** gosh! wow!  
**crisps:** potato chips  
**crook:** sick, unwell

**cuppa:** cuppa tea, cuppa coffee, cuppa milo

**cuz:** as in male or female cousin

**dag:** hard case; joker; comedian, as in "Joe Blow's a bit of a dag isn't he?" "A bit of a dag mate! - He's the whole sheep's arse!" (Perhaps you have to be a Kiwi to appreciate that one)

**dairy:** "corner" store originally only selling milk, bread, papers, convenience foods and dairy produce, and until the past decade or so, the only shop allowed to open 7 days a week. Still is the only shop allowed to open on Christmas day and Good Friday, for a few hours, and without a special licence.

**ding:** a small dent in a vehicle; as in "the prang caused a bit of a ding"

**dole:** unemployment benefit; income support for the unemployed

**doing the ton:** Driving really, really fast! but corrected by Phil Lyall as "Doing 100mph" (and I agree, although only us "oldies" would remember the thrill of the possibility your car could actually go that fast!)

**dodgy:** bad, unreliable, spoiled; as in "that fish is a bit dodgy". FromJT

**draughts:** checkers

**dreaded lurgy:** alternative name for the flu or a head cold; used as an excuse for not going to work, as in "I can't come in today because I have the dreaded lurgy". Also slang for venereal diseases.

**dressng gown:** bathrobe

**dummy:** pacifier

**dunny:** toilet, bathroom, lavatory

**duvet:** quilt

**entree:** appetizer or hors d'oeuvre. Memories of limp lettuce & shrimp smothered with a disgustingly pink sauce always come to mind here. Thank goodness the Kiwi taste buds have finally "grown up"

**eh:** pronounced as you would the letter "a" and often used at the end of sentences when expecting a response to a statement - it is not spoken as a question. i.e. "This would be a better gift eh", instead of saying "Do you think this would be a better gift"? Using it this way has become an everyday part of our conversation. It is also often used as a substitute for "pardon"? or "what"? i.e. "eh"? - but neither "what"? nor "eh"? are really acceptable and you would probably get a lengthy lecture about polite language if you tried using it too often ©(you would from me anyway!) Suggested by Marlene

**fagged out:** see knackered

**fancy:** hanker after somebody

**fanny:** A warning to Americans, from an American, Jody Tompson: take care how you use this phrase in New Zealand! A "fanny" refers to female genitalia; fanny is not the same as bottom!

**fizzy:** soda pop

**finger stalls:** back seats at the movie theatre, where adolescents take their girlfriends (not to watch the movie!). Although these days they don't necessarily bother with the back seats!

**flannel:** wash cloth

**flash:** sensational or "that's flash" meaning it looks really good. flat: apartment

**flicks:** movies, picture theatre

**flog:** steal, nick

**footpath:** pavement or sidewalk

**fortnight:** two consecutive weeks, derived from 14 days (nights)

**french letter:** condom frenchie: condom

**fringe:** bangs

**frock tart:** without the persistence of Laura Straub the meaning of this phrase would have remained a mystery. Quote: Its TV/Movie industry slang (and it is Kiwi!) for someone who works on/designs/sews the costumes. The term came from a disclaimer at the end a rather costume intense version of 'Xena: Warrior Princess'. It read: "No frock tarts were killed during the production of this motion picture, however, many wished they had been" gas guzzler: large car,

usually associated with older USA imports

**gawk / gawking:** stare at; take a look at. As in "What are you gawking at!?" or "Take a gawk at this!"

**get off the grass:** exclamation of disbelief; equivalent to "stop pulling my leg", "get outta here", and "no way"

**gimme:** abbreviation for "give me..."

**give your ferret a run:** have sex

**gizza:** abbreviation for "give us a..."

**going bush:** become reclusive. And expanded by Jonathan:- To take off for the bush and live for an extended period to "get away from it all".

**good on ya, mate!:** congratulations, well done

**good as gold:** a good job well done; not a problem; an affirmative answer - as in Q: "Do you mind if I pay for this later"? A: "Good as gold mate, good as gold". From John Dahms greasies: common term for fish and chips, probably because they usually are! (greasy that is) gridiron: American football.

**ground floor:** first floor. Very confusing for Kiwi visitors to the States! When using lifts

(elevators) we are always one floor out!

**gumboots:** rubber boots, wellingtons, wellies

**gummies:** gumboots

**guts for garters:** in big trouble; as in "I'll have your guts for garters!"

**hard case:** joker; comedian

**hard yakka:** hard work, associated with labouring

**heaps:** general expression to mean a lot, as in "miss you heaps", or try hard; "give it heaps" hissy fit: throwing a tantrum when things you don't get your way or when someone does something to offend you. From Jenni with thanks.

**hokey pokey:** 'sea foam' candy

**home 'n hosed:** safe, completed successfully

**hoon:** usually associated with young adults, fast cars, loud stereos and alcohol

**hooray:** the Kiwi "Goodbye"

**hosing down:** raining heavily

**hottie:** hot water bottle

**hunky dory: or honky dory:** everything's fine, as in "my life is hunky dory"

**ice block:** popsicle

**jandal:** thongs, flip-flops

**jersey:** sweater

**judder bar:** speed bump

**jumper:** woollen sweater

**Kiwi:** New Zealander

**kiwi:** an endangered flightless bird native to New Zealand

**kiwifruit:** hairy skinned fruit with lime green flesh - formerly known as Chinese Gooseberry kick the bucket: die, cark it

**knackered:stuffed;** fagged out; rooted, as in "I am knackered"; "that bike is knackered" and surplus farm animals go to the "Knackers Yard"! (This word has MANY uses- few of them being optimistic!) From PN

**knickers:** underwear

**L&P:** fizzy soda water, Lemon & Paeroa (L&P); originally lemon flavoured spring water from the town of Paeroa, but this is no longer the case.

**lemonade:** 7Up

**lift:** elevator

**lolly:** candy

**long-drop:** outhouse, outdoor lao, shithouse (blushing as I type that)

**loo:** bathroom

**loose metal:** gravel road (see also metal road)

**lorry:** truck

**mad:** crazy

**main:** primary dish of a meal

**Maori:** indigenous people of New Zealand. Phil Lyall also pointed out that this word translates to "The People". I personally wouldn't know, but I'm sure we'll both be corrected if it's wrong:-)



**mate:** budclie (common term, and can be used even with strangers) as in "how's it going mate" for "how are you", but it is NOT used to the same extent as spoken in Australia where every second word seems to be "mate".

**metal road:** a country road (usually) with a gravel or shingle surface (see also loose metal)  
**morris club:** a very exclusive group or club of New Zealand males who call each other "Morris", and in doing so it can cause a great deal of confusion to outsiders when they greet one another by the same name; as in "How's it going Morris?" replied with "Good thanks Morris, and you?" Membership is by invitation only.

motorway: freeway

**Mum:** Mom

**naff off:** get lost!

**nana:** female grandparent or someone who goes to bed early or naps in the afternoons

**nandy:** :MY male grandparent nappy: diaper

**netball:** game somewhat similar to basketball

**nought:** zero

**pack a sad:** become morose, ill-humoured, moody. Also suggested as meaning "broken or died" i.e. the fridge "packed a sad"

**pakeha:** non-Maori person

**panel beater:** auto body shop pavement: sidewalk

**petrol:** gasoline

**pie cart:** affection term for a road-side or side-show food seller's converted mobile caravan, from which you can buy predominantly fast food take-aways such as pies, burgers, hot-dogs, fish and chips and such-like tasty treats.

**piece-of-piss:** easy as in "that was a piece of piss to make".

**pike out:** to give up when the going gets tough

**pikelet:** small pancake often served with jam and whipped cream

**piker:** one who gives up easily (see pike-out)

**pinky:** little finger

**pinky bar:** a chocolate-covered marshmallow confection

**piss:** beer, as in "get on the piss"\*

**pissed:** drunk, inebriated

**pissed-off:** angry, as in "I'm really pissed off!"

**pissing down:** raining heavily

**piss around:** waste time or effort in a futile manner a.k.a. fart about

**piss-up:** social gathering with alcohol

**plaster:** see sticking plaster

**plod:** friendly term for local policeman

**pong:** bad smell

**power cut:** outage postal code: zip code

**pottle:** a small tub (with hot chips in!)\*

**pony tail:** as in hair tied at the back of one's head

**pram:** baby carriage, stroller

**prang:** minor vehicle accident, or a major one as in "that was one hell of a prang"

**pub:** bar, hotel where liquor is served

**puckeroo:** Something that is broken, bugged, rooted or otherwise dysfunctional. From Grant but with this addition from Jeff Law:- As a matter of interest, the correct spelling of 'Puckeroo' is, according to Reed's Maori Dictionary, 'Pakaru' meaning 'Break' or 'Broken'. I pondered over changing the spelling to the correct format, but decided against it, because the correct spelling

bears little resemblance to the pronunciation as it stands today and the change could have caused even more confusion ;-)

**push bike:** bicycle

**pushing up daisies:** dead and buried

**quite nice:** a term used when you can't really think of anything better to say ; as in "her hat is quite nice", and you often mean the opposite!

**rack off:** go away (angry), piss off

**raining cats & dogs:** raining heavily!

**randy:** horny, feeling sexy

**rark up:** give somebody a good telling off

**rattle your dags:** hurry up; get a move on. And from Jeff Law...The expression 'Rattle your

dags' reputedly refers to a somewhat mucky sheep 'rattling it's dags (dried excretia hanging from the wool)' when running!

**rellies:** family, relatives

**root:** to have sex. A warning to folk from the USA! - A female visitor from the US has this to say... My first time in NZ I made the unfortunate mistake of listing off my hobbies to a fami!J that had me over for tea.... among my hobbies? "I like to root for the football team!" (one of the bqys said, "What, the WHOLE team??") Credit for this listing is on the page - but I'm not saying where!

**ring:** phone somebody; as in "I'll give him/her/them a ring"

**roadway:** pavement

**rubber:** eraser

**rubbish:** trash or garbage; as in "should I throw this in the rubbish?"

**samie:** sandwich

**scull:** drink beer rapidly

**scarfie:** university student, particularly from Universities of the South Island

**sealed road:** paved road

**serviette:** A napkin made of either fabric or absorbent paper, and used to wipe hands & mouth at tea. From JT

**shandy:** drink made with lemonade and beer

**she'll be right:** not a problem, it'll be O.I.<

**shippie:** prostitute "working" the ships docked at our international ports

**shorts:** clips from up-coming movies

**shufti:** as in "Take a Shufti at this, mate", meaning "have a look at this". From Jeff Law with thanks.

**skiting**: bragging; showing off

**sickie**: as in "Throw a sickie":- to take time off work "officially" for illness, but more likely for a fun day! From Peter

**skint**: short of money

**squiz**: as in "Have a squiz":- to take a look at something; "Giza Squiz":- ask for a look at something. Also from Peter

**smoko**: break, rest period

**snarky**: mixture of sarcastic and nasty

**snotty**: snooty, ill-humoured, packing a sad

**sook**: kindly description of someone who is being silly, or behaving like a softy or scaredy cat.

As :- "If you're being a sook"... If J• USt a b1' g sook" and so on... More often than not the phrase m. 1.s

used as a term of endearment. Suggested by Pam.

**sparkie**: electrician

**spew:** to throw up

**sparrow fart:** very early in the morning - the crack of dawn. From Niki

**spinner:** usually used to describe a female who is a little flakey/stupid (an air-head), as in "she's a real spinner!". From Niki. And as suggested by Jonathan:- Someone who tells untrue stories

when they're "Spinning a bullshit yarn"

**spit the dummy:** to throw a tantrum or get mad. From Niki

**sprog:** a child

**sticking plaster:** band-aid

**stirrer:** trouble-maker, agitator

**strapped for cash:** short of money

**strewth:** honestly, expletive showing frustration. Expanded upon by J Witherow as follows:

"Strewth is an expletive and also slang for honestly. But it's my understanding that it's derived from the old phrase 'God's Truth'. Which, when run together, is ... s'truth!" Makes sense! (I agree)

**strop:** go for a strop, go for a burn, speed with reckless disregard

**stroppy:** a fighter; easily provoked to anger; fiercely protective

**stubby:** small bottle of beer

**stuffed:** really tired. From JI

**stupid as a two bob watch:** used to describe a person who behaves irrationally

**suck the kumura:** to die or otherwise cease

**sunday driver:** Driving really, really slow

**sunnies:** sunglasses

**super loo:** massive automated public toilet complex. From JT

**suss:** to figure out

**sweet-as:** a term people say instead of "cool" or "awesome". ("That car over there is sweet-as!")

**ta:** Thanks

**tata:** goodbye, usually when speaking to a child

**take-aways:** New Zealand term for "take-outs" or food "to go".

**take the piss:** to ridicule

**take a hike:** Expression of anger, as in; "Go away!" "Get lost!"

**tasty cheese:** sharp cheddar cheese

**tea:** dinner - generic name for evening meal

**tea towel:** dish rag

**thick:** not too smart

**tights:** pantyhose

**tiki tour:** roundabout way to get somewhere; scenic tour

**tinned goods:** canned goods

**tip:** dump or recycling depot. Submitted by Jan in Canada- thanks Jan! :)

**tracksuit:** sweats

**tramping:** hiking

**togs:** swimsuit, bathing suit

**tomato sauce:** catsup

**torch:** flashlight

**trots:** horse racing with a buggy

**trots:** diarrhoea as in "having a dose of the trots"

**TT2:** am I the only one who remembers TT2's? (Tip Top Iceblocks)

**twink:** white-out

**two sammies short of a picnic:** used to describe a person who is a "bit thick".

**tyre:** tire

**underpants:** undershorts

**up the duff:** pregnant

**valet:** a person who cleans vehicles... NOT parks them!

**verge:** grassy area on the side of the road, bern

**vest:** undershirt

**vegemite:** spread for toast or bread. Indescribable, but missed by many expat Kiwi's. Bill Tabb describes it as... "A spread the color of dark molasses, the consistency of cold honey and the flavor of yeasty soy sauce. A flavor that is acquired, and quite good on warm soft pretzels here in California." (Actually, it's a good description!)

**walkshorts:** dressy shorts for men

**wally:** clown, loser

**wardrobe:** clothes closet

**wee cracker:** From Keith Goetzman, with thanks. "A Kiwi mystified me with this one morning while I was tramping at Nelson Lakes." "Wee cracker of a dgy, isn't it?"

**wet blanket:** Someone who spoils the fun of others; someone who doesn't get into the "swing" of things, particularly at a social occasion.

**wellies:** gumboots

**what are ya!:** "Are you mad?" or "You're taking the piss!" And it implies doubt about

"manhood" when a male shows fear. As in:- "What are ya! ... Pussy?"

**wharfie:** stevedore

**whinge:** complain

**windscreen:** windshield

**wobbly** (pack a wobbly): become angry, get snotty

**wonky:** crooked

**wop-wops:** out of the way location

**yonks:** forever, a long time ago, ages; as in "I haven't seen them in yonks".

**yarn:** spin a "tall story", tell a joke

**yack:** general conversation held between friends; as in "have a yack".

**yank:** An american (yank' is a term I personally would not use)

**yoo-hoo:** Hello, I'm here. Can I come in?

**you ain't wrong:** that's right, yes

**you can't help bad luck:** contrary to the wording, the phrase quite often means **congratulations!**, also a dismissive phrase for "too bad" or "who cares"

**zed:** Z; zee; the last letter of the alphabet.