

Curious Question #19 – Calling names

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone, this is Maura ...

Robin: Hello everyone, this is Robin ...

Maura: And this is your weekly Culips podcast.

Robin: Indeed! And this is the podcast where we take one of your questions and try to answer it as best we can.

Maura: Exactly! The **Curious Questions** podcast. If you want more information about this or any of our other episodes, go to our website, Culips.com, and click on Lipservice. Now, let's get to the question today. This question is from Mohammed in Egypt. Thanks so much for your emails Mohammed, we really appreciate them!

Robin: Yeah, and let's take a look at this question. The question reads, "*What does the idiomatic expression, 'call him **names**,' mean? Is it **insulting**?*"

Maura: So yeah, it's a really great question because it seems like a simple sentence, but Mohammed, you're right. To **call someone names** is not good.

Robin: OK, yeah, to **call someone names**, it doesn't mean that you're calling them their name, so I'm not saying "Maura" or something else. It means instead that I'm calling—I'm saying something **insulting** towards them.

Maura: Right! Like a **bad name**. Yeah, like "**stupid**" or something like that.

Robin: "**Idiot.**"

Maura: Yeah, "**idiot**," something that's not nice.

Robin: We could actually replace "**names**" with "**bad names**" or "**bad words**," but we just say "**names**" instead.

Maura: Right, so to say, "he **called her names**," we know that it wasn't nice and it was rude and, yeah, not good. So yeah, we can say, "they **called him names**," or ...

Robin: "She **called him names**," "they **called each other names** ..."

- Maura: Yeah, there's all possibilities for **calling people names**.
- Robin: Absolutely.
- Maura: So, for example, we could say, "John called Paul an **idiot** and a **jerk**." So John **called Paul names**. Yeah. Hey, I got another example.
- Robin: What's that?
- Maura: Robin, did you hear that Sarah was **calling Peter names**?
- Robin: Oh really? What was she calling him?
- Maura: She was calling him **stupid**. Yup, not very nice.
- Robin: Not nice at all!
- Maura: Exactly! So, Robin, when maybe do people **call each other names**?
- Robin: I think usually people call each other names when they're angry with each other and when they're arguing. So, for example, family members – when a brother and a sister or a brother and a brother argue with each other they might **call each other names**, or, for example, when people have a car accident.
- Maura: Yeah, the other day I saw a car accident happen right close to where I live and the people got out of the cars and they were so mad. They were **yelling** at each other and calling each other some pretty **bad names**.
- Robin: I can imagine what they were saying.
- Maura: Yeah, it wasn't good. And kids, you know, kids can be **mean** sometimes.
- Robin: Absolutely, on the playground, you know, saying bad things towards one another, **calling each other names**.
- Maura: Yeah for sure, kids **call each other names**. So, yeah, to repeat the original question, Mohammed asked, "*Is to **call someone names** **insulting**?*" and yes, definitely it is. Right?
- Robin: **One hundred percent**, absolutely, it is **insulting**.

- Maura: So, let's give a few more examples of what some **bad names** are, some simple examples.
- Robin: We said before "**stupid**" is a name that is used quite often or a word that is used often.
- Maura: To **call someone names**, for sure, "**stupid**" means you're not smart.
- Robin: Not a very nice thing to say.
- Maura: No. For sure. We could also call someone an **idiot**.
- Robin: An **idiot**, it means the same thing, too. If you're an **idiot** you are **stupid**. You're **stupid**, you're an **idiot**. Yeah, that would be **calling someone names**.
- Maura: For sure, and not a nice thing to say.
- Robin: No, no, no!
- Maura: People don't like to be called **stupid** or to be called **idiots**.
- Robin: You're a **jerk**.
- Maura: Right, "**jerk**," that's another one.
- Robin: That's another one.
- Maura: You're not nice John, you're a **jerk**. So to be a "**jerk**" means you're not nice, you're not a nice person.
- Robin: Absolutely.
- Maura: So, those I think are the simplest ones, "**stupid**," "**idiot**," "**jerk**" and we'll put some more interesting **bad names** in our Lipservice on our website so don't forget to check that out. In case you're curious about these other **bad names**.
- Robin: Indeed, indeed, and remember you can be very creative with these **names**, it doesn't necessarily have to be "**stupid**" or "**idiot**," it could be something like, "**you big smelly horse**."
- Maura: Exactly! Right! So there's lots of different ways you can **call someone names**, but it's never a nice thing to do and we don't want to recommend it.

Robin: No, absolutely not.

Maura: Yes, we don't **call each other names** at Culips, right?

Robin: Nope, 'cause we like each other.

Maura: Go to our website, Culips.com. This has been your Curious Questions podcast and we'll see you next time.

Robin: Take care, everyone.

Maura: Bye.

Detailed Explanation

Insulting

In this episode we assume that you all know the meaning of the word “**insulting**.” The act of **calling someone names** is definitely **insulting**.

“**Insulting**” is an adjective and it means “to cause **insult**” or “to be rude.” When a person **insults** someone or acts in an **insulting** way, this means that the other person does not like what the first person is doing. People can be **insulted** by the things you say and the way you act.

Here are some examples describing **insulting** behaviour:

Jane: I cooked for three hours and then Carl didn't eat any of it. I found that so **insulting**.
(This is **insulting** because Jane worked hard and then Carl did not appreciate all her hard work.)

Fred: My boss was **insulting** my work and calling it ugly.
(This is **insulting** because calling something “ugly” is often considered very direct and rude.)

Matt: The other night when we were out, someone was talking badly about Canadians.
The guy was saying that we all smell bad. I was so **insulted**.
(This is **insulting** because “the guy” spoke badly of Canadians.)

To call someone names

So, “**to call someone names**” is definitely **insulting** because you say something rude about a person. You directly **insult** who the person is.

Sometimes adults **call each other names**, but only in special circumstances. Or some adults never **call each other names**. **Calling someone names** is generally considered immature behaviour, usually done by young people. We say in this episode that kids are more likely to **call each other names**.

Here is an example of the expression being used in a popular Christmas song, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*:

...

All of the other reindeer
Used to laugh and **call him names**

...

Other reindeer (you will have to check out our Christmas episodes if you want to know what exactly this is!) are not nice to Rudolph. They laugh at Rudolph and they **call him names**. At this point Rudolph is young, when it is more common for people to **call each other names**.

Family members sometimes **call each other names**, especially brothers and sisters when they are young. Sometimes romantic couples **call each other names** when they argue. Or in an extreme situation when people are angry, like a car accident, people **call each other names**.

Bad names

“**Bad names**” means **insulting names** or **names** that are not good. We give you some ideas in this episode.

Here are some simple examples of “**bad names**”:

- He is so **stupid**.
- She is such an **idiot**.
- They are all **jerks**.

OR a combination:

- He is such a **stupid idiot**.

There are so many “**bad names**” for people. Some of the names are really horrible and **mean**. Here are some other “bad names” that are synonyms (have a similar meaning) to the names above.

- Brainless
- Dumb
- Dense
- Simple or Simple-minded

We also have **names** for the opposite, for people who are really smart. People sometimes **call them names**, too!

- Nerd
- Geek
- Dork
- Techie
- Dweeb

Bad words

“**Bad words**” are any words that are rude and **insulting**. These are also known as swear words or curse words. People almost never swear in professional situations because it can upset some people. You might swear with friends or other people you know well. Some people have a habit of swearing and others do not.

Mean

This word has so many **meanings** (See! We just used one). In this case, we use the word “**mean**” as “not nice” or “to not be considerate of other people, and say or do hurtful things.”

Kids can be **mean** to each other. They **call each other names** and say things that are not nice. But really, anyone can be **mean**. You can have a **mean** boss at work, or your friend could also be **mean** to you one day for no real reason.

In any situation, **calling someone names** is definitely a **mean** thing to do.

One hundred percent sure!

Robin says in this episode that he is **one hundred percent** sure of something. **One hundred percent** is 100%, which is a perfect or maximum score. So, to be **one hundred percent** sure means that you are completely certain about something.

Here are some examples.

Beatrice: Are you sure that we don't have to finish the report for today?

Darren: I am **one hundred percent** sure we don't have to finish the report today.

Jenny: I am not sure about the procedure.

Kiley: If you are not **one hundred percent** sure of what you are doing, stop right now.

You big smelly horse

Robin gives this crazy strange name “**You big smelly horse**” at the end of this episode. He is trying to show everyone how a “**bad name**” can be almost anything. Sometimes people **call another person a bad name** with five or more words in it. People don't usually call someone a horse.

But, like Robin does, we do often use “you” before we **call someone a name**. Here are some examples of this.

- You little **jerk**.
- You **stupid idiot**.
- Look what happened, you big geek.

Another thing that we often do when calling someone a name is use simple adjectives like, “big” or “little.” Check out the examples above and see how “little” and “big” were used. Even Robin says, “**You big smelly horse.**”

There was a very popular movie that was released around Christmas 1990 called *Home Alone*. It is about a young boy named Kevin who wakes up one morning and finds his family gone! He does not know that they went to France and forgot about him. He had wished they would disappear and now he thinks his wish came true.

So Kevin wakes up in the morning and remembers all the “**bad names**” his family members have called him. Here is the list from that scene in the movie*.

.....

Kevin McCallister: I made my family disappear.

[He thinks back to family members saying bad things about him]

Megan McCallister: Kevin, you're **completely helpless!**

Linnie McCallister: No, Kevin, you're what the French call ***les incompetents***.

Buzz McCallister: Kevin, I'm going to feed you to my tarantula.

Jeff McCallister: Kevin, you are **such a disease!**

Kate McCallister: There are 15 people in this house and you're the only one who has to make trouble.

Frank McCallister: Look what you did, **you little jerk.**

*Source: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0099785/quotes>

Quiz (see the answers at the bottom of this Lipservice)

1. To call someone names is _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) nice
- b) funny
- c) insulting
- d) polite

2. Which expression has the same meaning as “to call someone names”?

- a) to call someone good names
- b) to call someone bad names
- c) to call someone
- d) to name someone

3. Which are NOT examples of bad names?

- a) friendly, polite, kind
- b) stupid, jerk, idiot
- c) dweeb, geek, dork
- d) simple, dense, mindless

4. Which is an occasion when people might call each other names?

- a) at a fun party
- b) after an accident caused by one person
- c) at a concert
- d) when playing a game

5. If you are one hundred percent sure, what does that mean?

- a) you failed your test
- b) you passed your test
- c) you are almost sure
- d) you are completely sure

6. Which word do we sometimes also use when calling someone names?

- a) big
- b) little
- c) you
- d) all of the above

Answers: 1.c 2.b 3.a 4.b 5.d 6.d