

Crazy English

by Richard Lederer

Let's face it: English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant or ham in hamburger, neither apple nor pine in pineapple.

English muffins were not invented in England or french fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies, while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square, and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write, but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce, and hammers don't ham?

If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth? One goose, 2 geese. So, one moose, 2 meese? One index, two indices? Is cheese the plural of choose?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell? Park on driveways and drive on parkways?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites? How can the weather be hot as hell one day and cold as hell another?

When a house burns up, it burns down.

You fill in a form by filling it out and an alarm clock goes off by going on.

When the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible.

And why, when I wind up my watch, I start it, but when I wind up this essay, I end it?

Now I know why I flunked my English. It's not my fault; the silly language doesn't quite know whether it's coming or going.