



How to be English: Cockney Brass Tacks

Ah, Cockney rhyming slang — one of the quirkiest, cheekiest parts of British linguistic culture! Originating in the East End of London in the 19th century, it's a form of slang where a word is replaced by a phrase that rhymes with it — but (here's the trick!) the rhyming word is usually left out. So, it becomes a bit of a secret code. Fun, confusing, and very, very London.

Word → replaced by rhyming phrase → rhyming bit dropped

Examples:

1. "Apples and pears" = stairs > "I'm going up the apples."
2. "Dog and bone" = phone > "Give me a bell on the dog."
3. "Trouble and strife" = wife > "The trouble's not happy with me!"

Here are a few phrases that are understood by most English people and used in everyday conversations, as follows:

- **Dustbin lid (s)** – (kid/s)
- **Almond Rocks** = socks
- **Tea leaf** = thief
 Rosie = Rosie Lee = tea
- **Ones and twos** = shoes
- **Brass Tacks** = facts
- **Bread and Honey** = money
- **China** = china plate = mate
- **Duck and Dive** = skive (hide)
- **Frog** = frog & toad = road
- **Adam and Eve** = believe
- **Sky** = sky rocket = pocket
- **Basin of Gravy** = baby
- **Barnet Fair** = Barnet = hair
- **Boat Race** = Boat = face
- **Mutton** = Mutt and Jeff = deaf
- **Pen and Ink** = stink
- **Plates** = plates of meat = feet
- **Rabbit** = rabbit and pork = talk
- **Syrup** = syrup of figs = wig(s)
- **Tom and Dick** = sick
- **Whistle** = whistle and flute = suit
- **Bricks and Mortar** = daughter
- **Loaf** = loaf of bread = head
- **Minces** = mince pies = eyes
- **Treacle** = treacle tart = sweetheart
- **Hank Marvin** = Starving
- **Jack** = Jack Jones = alone
- **Skin** = skin and blister = sister
- **Porky** = pork pie = lie

Our modern-day favourite: It's all gone Pete = Pete Tong (famous DJ) = wrong