

Keep your English up to date

Hoodie Hoodlums

Professor David Crystal

There was a newspaper headline in the middle of last year, 'Hoodie Hoodlums' it said. It referred to people who were going around looking like gangs wearing hooded tops, baseball caps, clothing which deliberately obscured the face, suggesting that the wearer might be a danger to the public, so much so that baseball caps and hooded tops were actually banned in 2005 at one shopping mall in Britain. Well, as you might expect, it caused a huge reaction. I mean, youngsters complaining of being stereotyped just because of a few nasty people.

The linguistics isn't so controversial. The spelling first of all, 'hoody', or 'hoodie', and more often with the 'ie' than not. And that's because it's the usual familiarity marker that you get on lots of words in English, words like, sweetie, auntie, goalie (goal keeper), daddie and mummie, and of course in names too, Susie (Susan).

Well, will it catch on? I think so, judging by the huge sales of hoodies now. And also, it's achieved a kind of presence in popular music. There was a single released towards the end of 2005 by Lady Sovereign, it was actually called 'Hoodie'. And then on the web the other day, I was looking at ipods, and the latest accessory to keep your ipod clothed – what do you think it's called? An ipod hoodie!



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