

Keep your English up to date

In your dreams!

Professor David Crystal

You wanna get on TV? 'In your dreams!' That phrase came in during the 1990s. It meant someone is being unrealistic, very optimistic, very hopeful. Any circumstances in which expectations are raised - in your dreams!

It mixes two senses of the word 'dream' - what happens when you're asleep, of course, and the sense of day dream or reverie - it's a very general use.

And I've heard it said all over the place in recent months. I've heard it said when in a traffic jam, when the driver thought the road ahead was clearing. 'In your dreams!' said the passenger.

And most interesting of all, I've now heard the phrase being extended with the pronoun changing – you see, 'in your dreams' is the second person, but I've now heard it with a first person and a third person. The other day I heard, 'He's going to try for a part in the movie - in his dreams!' – third person. And then one day somebody said to me, 'I hear you're planning a holiday this year'. And I remember muttering to myself, 'in my dreams'!

