

# Keep your English up to date

## Pre-owned

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Elsewhere in this series we considered euphemisms and how sometimes people use words to soften the blow of something bad, or to make something sound better than it actually is. And this is certainly the case with 'pre-owned'.

Do you buy everything new, or do you sometimes shop in second-hand shops, or one of the charity shops which are in every UK high street? If you really want to save money you might go 'dumpster diving' – fishing around in containers in streets for handy pieces of furniture or similar which have been left out by their previous owners to be taken away by the local council.

Or perhaps you buy things on an online auction site such as eBay? In the week following Christmas day in 2007, over one million unwanted Christmas presents were put up for sale on eBay and all of these things had already had at least one owner.

Some years ago, you would have thought of these items as 'second hand', but these days you're more likely to consider them 'pre-owned'. It has a much nicer sound to it, doesn't it? Nobody wants to have a 'second' anything, but 'pre-owned' has a warm feeling to it, almost like you're looking after it for someone else.

'Pre-owned' appears to have originated with the automobile industry in the sixties, where dealers realised that people were more likely to buy a car marked like this, than one marked as 'second hand'. It just sounds better. And you can take this even further, make the process even more acceptable with the ultra-modern version - 'pre-loved'!

So, next time someone looks down their nose at your not-so-new car, just tell them it was pre-loved – that'll confuse them!



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