

Cognates: Stolen Words

Over 2000 years ago in the Western part of the planet, a group of people called Romans became very powerful. They started in the city of Rome in the country we now call Italy, and conquered more and more and more and more of the lands around them. They ruled the world from the top of Africa up through England.



The Romans spoke Latin. In this map of the Roman Empire, the country names are written in Latin. What is the Latin word for Italy? _____
What is the Latin word for Germany? _____
What is the Latin word for Spain? _____

When the Romans defeated a country, they moved in and started speaking Latin. Soon the defeated groups started mixing Latin with their languages. However, the farther they were from Rome, the less their languages sounded like Latin. Which language do you think probably sounds most like Latin? _____ Why?

Today, Latin is dead, but many languages still use Latin words. For example, what was the Latin word for Africa? _____ What was the Latin word for Europe? _____ England was one of the last countries to develop its own language. Instead of making up totally new words for everything, they stole words from the languages around them, especially the Latin or Roman(ce) languages, like Spanish and French. Really, though, English stole from everyone: Germans, Mandarin Chinese, Native Americans. In fact, we still steal new words when we need them! Think about “avatar” from Sanskrit and “karaoke” from Japanese.

We call these stolen words **COGNATES**.

Here's the rule: If 2 words from different languages SOUND almost the same, they are probably cognates.

Are these pairs of words cognates?

Write “**cognates**” or “**not cognates**” next to each pair.

English friend/Spanish amigo	_____
English chocolate/Korean chokollit	_____
English music/Russian muzyka	_____
English speak/Ukrainian hovoryty	_____
English acid/Turkish asit	_____
English school/Portuguese escola	_____
English computer/Burmese kwanpyauutar	_____
English helicopter/Arabic hilikubtar	_____
English telephone/Somali telefoonka	_____
English television/Hindi teleevijan	_____

THREE TYPES of cognates



Most cognates are not spelled the same. They **SOUND** the same. To decide if two words from different languages are cognates, you must listen to them.

What do you need to do if you want to tell if 2 words are cognates? You need to _____!

These words are cognates with English words. **Sort them into the correct categories.**

school/Spanish escuela action/Turkish aksyon jungle/Hindi jangal

president/Russian president humor/Ukrainian humor

map/Portuguese mapa line/Burmese line artist/French artiste

sandwich/Korean saendeuwichi captain/Arabic qob'tan

Africa/Somali Afrika coffee/Chinese kafei festival/Haitian festival

bread/Marathi breda mango/Kyrgyz mango

Spelled the Same	Spelled Slightly Differently	Spelled Very Differently