

BY THE WAY



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WODEHOUSE IN THE OED – 6

Of over 1,600 P G Wodehouse quotations in the current edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, some 192 are principal citations, indicating either the first or only use of a word or of the particular nuance for which it appears. This is the final group: see also *By The Way* 5, 8, 11, 14, and 17.

Citations in the *OED* are derived from research by a large panel appointed by the Editors, augmented by information provided by the public. One cannot say definitively that these words or their usage were Wodehouse inventions, merely that the Editors have learned of no earlier use. In fact, readers will recognise that PGW himself used certain expressions earlier than the quotations selected.

Spine-freezer 1960 *Jeeves in the Offing*, ch3

Mrs Cream . . . worked in her room every afternoon on her new spine-freezer . . .

Spooked up 1939 *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, ch3

“I saw one of those Western pictures at our local cinema last night, in which a character described himself as being all spooked up with zip and vinegar. That is precisely how I feel. The yeast of spring is fermenting in my veins, and I am ready for anything.”

Spot 1922 *Jill the Reckless*, ch16

Another debate on the subject of blues, ambers and the management of the ‘spot’.

Squiggle-eyed 1927 *Meet Mr Mulliner (The Story of William)*

There is a certain stage in the progress of a man’s love when he feels like curling up in a ball and making little bleating noises if the object of his affections so much as looks squiggle-eyed at him; . . .

Stiff-bosomed 1925 *Carry On, Jeeves (Clustering Round Young Bingo)*

“Then lay out one of the gents’ stiff-bosomed.”

(draw the short) Straw 1939 *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, ch1

It was the person on whom life had thrust the . . . task who must be considered to have drawn the short straw.

Swacked 1936 *Laughing Gas*, ch9

“My father used to drink till he saw the light, and he prided himself on being able to say anything at any time of the day or night, no matter how swacked he might be, without tripping over a syllable.”

Sweetie-pie 1928 *Money for Nothing*, ch4

“Hello, sweetie-pie,” said Miss Molloy.

Switch 1935 *The Luck of the Bodkins*, ch14

“I plunged into . . . your state-room . . . and gave the sleeping figure . . . a hearty wallop . . . and it was Gertrude. . . . What’s the idea? Why the switch?”

Switch 1919 *My Man Jeeves (Doing Clarence a Bit of Good)*

It struck me that I’d no right to butt in on his secret sermons, so I switched the conversation.

Syncopated 1924 *Bill the Conqueror*, ch3

The breeze was stronger now, and it ruffled the surface of the water, so that the goldfish had for the moment a sort of syncopated appearance.

Think (on one's feet) 1935 *The Luck of the Bodkins*, ch16

PS Think on your feet, boy!

(write one's) Ticket 1928 *Money for Nothing*, ch5

"But Oil's the stuff, and if you want to part with any of that Silver River of yours, Tom," he said, "pass it across this desk and write your own ticket."

Ticking bomb 1960 *Jeeves in the Offing*, ch1

But while equipped with eyes like twin stars . . . B Wickham had also the disposition and general outlook on life of a ticking bomb.

Tie a can 1926 *The Heart of a Goof (Jane Gets Off the Fairway)*

What caused the definite rift was Jane's refusal to tie a can to Rodney Spelvin.

Two-reel 1929 *Mr Mulliner Speaking (The Ordeal of Osbert Mulliner)*

"Come on, let's beef in or we'll miss the educational two-reel comic."

Unscramble 1923 *The Inimitable Jeeves (Startling Dressiness of a Lift Attendant)*

I collapsed on to the settee and rather lost interest in things for the moment. When I had unscrambled myself I found that Jeeves and the child had retired.

Up top 1967 *Company for Henry*, ch4

It doesn't do any harm if she lends a hand herself. Can't leave everything to the men up top.

Up-and-down 1923 *The Inimitable Jeeves (Startling Dressiness of a Lift Attendant)*

"Read this letter." He gave it the up-and-down.

Upswing 1922 *The Clicking of Cuthbert (Ordeal by Golf)*

His upswing was shaky, and he swayed back perceptibly.

Weediness 1924 *Bill the Conqueror*, ch5

He had a certain weediness, a lack of thews and sinews.

What-the-hell 1924 *Leave It To Psmith*, ch10

"While everybody's cutting up and what-the-hellling."

Wheat-gold 1915 *Something Fresh*, ch3

Joan Valentine was a tall girl, with wheat-gold hair.

Whiffled 1927 *Meet Mr Mulliner (The Story of William)*

Intoxicated? The word did not express it by a mile. He was oiled, boiled, fried, plastered, whiffled, sozzled and blotto.

Whip 1925 *Carry On, Jeeves (The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy)*

I could hardly drag him away from the Whip, and as for the Switchback, he looked like spending the rest of his life on it.

Whistle 1934 *Right Ho, Jeeves*, ch17

Now that the whistle had been blown on his speech, it seemed to me that there was no longer any need for the strategic retreat which I had been planning.

Yowler 1935 *Blandings Castle and Elsewhere (The Go-Getter)*

He's a yowler, and girls always fall for yowlers. They have a glamour.

Zing 1919 *A Damsel in Distress*, ch6

The generous blood of the Belfers boiled over, and then - zing. They jerked him off to Vine Street.

Zippiness 1924 *Bill the Conqueror*, ch8

This series on Bookmakers' Swindling Methods . . . had always reached a fair level of zippiness; but never . . . had it so outzipped itself as in the present instalment.