

Five foreign expressions you should know

Foreign expressions have become an integral part of the English language. While you don't necessarily have to be familiar with all the foreign words in English, you should know the most common ones.

Many of these expressions are commonly used in newspaper headlines. If you are not familiar with them, you will not be able to understand the meaning of the headlines.

De Facto

De Facto has two meanings. When used as an adjective, it means 'actual'. When used as an adverb, it means 'in practice'. This is a Latin expression.

Examples are: de facto home, de facto government

A de facto government exercises power although it is not officially established.

A de facto home is not a real home, but it serves the same function as a home.

Vis-à-Vis

This is a French expression that serves as an adverb. It means 'face to face'. However, in English, this word is mainly used as a preposition meaning 'in relation to' or 'compared with'.

They sat vis-à-vis at the table.

This move will strengthen our position vis-à-vis our partners.

Status quo

This is a Latin expression. It means 'the existing state of affairs'.

The status quo should be maintained. (= Things should remain the way they presently are.)

Per se

Per se means 'by itself' or 'intrinsically'. This is a Latin expression.

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There is nothing wrong with his conduct per se. (= There is nothing intrinsically wrong with his conduct.)

Cul-de-sac

This is a French expression. It is mainly used to refer to a dead-end street. This expression is also used to refer to an action that leads to an impasse.