

## **What's the origin of the word 'blackleg'?**

When trade unions call for strikes, they expect all of their members to refrain from work. That is the norm. However, sometimes some members of the trade union go against the wishes of their leaders and go to work. These people will go to offices and factories while their fellow workers protest in the streets. They are called blacklegs. In British English, this term is mainly used to show disapproval.

All blacklegs will be suspended from the union.

The expression blackleg originated from the bird rook. As we all know, this bird is black in colour and has got black legs. Rooks are very cunning and they know how to steal food. Needless to say, few people like them. Even today, the term rook is sometimes used to refer to a person who takes advantage of gullible individuals. Since rooks have black legs, cheats are also called blacklegs. As time went by, this expression began to be used to refer to workers who cheat by going to work when their fellow employers are on strike.

The word rookie also has its origin in the word 'rook'. In the old days the word rookie was used to refer to a person who could be easily cheated because he / she lacks experience. Now this word is used to refer to any inexperienced individual.