



# LANGUAGE MATTERS

Because words shape how  
we perceive each sentient being





Language is a powerful tool that shapes our perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards the world around us. When it comes to animal welfare, the words and phrases we use can have a significant impact on how we view and treat animals. It is crucial to recognize that our language reflects and reinforces societal norms and values, including our treatment of animals.

Age-old idioms and phrases like "beating a dead horse" or "killing two birds with one stone" may seem harmless on the surface, but they perpetuate a culture of insensitivity and disregard for animal welfare. These expressions trivialise and normalise cruelty towards animals, contributing to a broader acceptance of their mistreatment. By using such phrases, we unknowingly reinforce the notion that animals are disposable objects, rather than sentient beings deserving of compassion and respect.

Similarly, labelling individuals as "animal heroes" or "animal saviours" may unintentionally perpetuate a hierarchical relationship between humans and animals. While these terms may stem from a place of admiration for those who dedicate their lives to animal welfare, they can reinforce the idea that humans are superior and have the power to save or control animals. Instead, we should strive for language that promotes empathy, cooperation, and a recognition of animals' inherent worth and rights.

As advocates for animal welfare, it is crucial to be mindful of the language we use. By choosing words that reflect empathy, respect, and a recognition of animals' intrinsic value, we can foster a more compassionate society. Let's replace harmful idioms with animal-friendly alternatives, acknowledge the inherent worth of all living beings, and promote a language of kindness and equality.

Join us in creating a world where animals are valued and protected. Support our mission and make a difference today:

<https://helpanimalsindia.org/donate>





# **Popular Phrases & Idioms**



Instead of

**"Kill two birds with one stone."**

Use the below alternates!

"Feed two birds with one scone."

"Love two birds with one heart."

"Cut two carrots with one knife."

Instead of

**"Beat a dead horse."**

Use the below alternates!

"Brush a groomed horse."

"Feed a fed horse."

Instead of

**"Like shooting fish in a barrel."**

Use the below alternate!

"Like picking berries from a basket"



Instead of

**"More than one way to skin a cat."**

Use the below alternates!

"More than one way to skin potatoes."

"More than one way to pet a cat."

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Instead of

**"Quit cold turkey."**

Use the below alternate!

"Quit cold Tofurkey"

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Instead of

**"Bring home the bacon."**

Use the below alternates!

"Bring home the bagels."

"Bring home the tempeh bacon."



Instead of

**"Let the cat out of the bag."**

Use the below alternate!

"Spill the beans"

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Instead of

**"Take the bull by the thorns."**

Use the below alternate!

"Take the flower by the thorns"

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Instead of

**"Be the guinea pig."**

Use the below alternate!

"Be the test-tube"

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Instead of

**"Hold your horses."**

Use the below alternate!

"Hold on"





# Insults



## **Don't use animals' names as insults.**

Animals who are commonly disrespected this way are chickens, cows, whales, rats, snakes, dogs, sheep, weasels, monkeys, and badgers. Most of the time, these insults are based on false stereotypes about animals, and their usage continues to normalise these ideas about them.

For example, chickens are not cowardly like speciesists would like us to think; they are known to be stoic protectors of their flocks.







**Prioritizing Sentience  
or Personhood Over  
Humanness**





## **Because there is no right that is inherently for humans and not for anyone else...**

Move away from saying "human rights" and instead try "sentient rights." Usually whatever we are talking about is also a right that animals deserve as well, such as water or health care. Avoid slogans such as "women's rights are human rights," because the rights that are at stake--reproductive autonomy, freedom from sexual harassment, protection from discrimination—are all rights that animals deserve too.

*Example: Life is a [human] sentient right.*

Replace "dehumanizing" with "depersonifying" to remind others that personhood, not humanness, is the criteria for being treated with dignity. Describing an experience as dehumanizing is commonplace when one has been abused, but this is problematic for two reasons:





1) It is a recognition that animals are treated worse than humans, without actually challenging that system, and

2) It is a reinforcement of the idea that humans deserve better treatment than nonhumans.  
Example: Spending the night in jail was a [dehumanizing] depersonifying experience.

*Example: Life is a [human] sentient right.*

Change the word "humanity" in contexts that imply that we are the only species that matters or that there is an essence that humans have that others don't. "Crimes against humanity" are really crimes against all beings. "Where is your humanity?" is an empty question that should be "Where is your compassion?" or "Where is your heart?"

*Example: Sustainable development is imperative for the sake of [humanity] all earthlings.*





**Prioritizing Sentience  
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## To center animals rather than ourselves...

- Do not refer to human activists as "heroes" for animals. We are still in the oppressor position and should remain humble. If a label is necessary, choose "ally" instead.

*Example: "He exemplifies allyship to animals" instead of "He is such an amazing hero for animals."*

- When talking about the stories of animals, make them the subjects of sentences. This puts the focus on animals rather than us.

*Example: "Ariel was liberated" instead of "We liberated Ariel."*

- When talking about the human acts of violence, make us the subjects of sentences. This reinforces that we are the ones responsible for their suffering.

*Example: "We suffocate fishes to death" instead of "Fishes are suffocated to death."*

- ■ Do not label establishments that hurt





- Do not label establishments that hurt animals as "vegan-friendly." A restaurant isn't friendly to vegans if they serve the bodies of animals, even if they have vegan options too. *Example: "Chipotle is a vegan-friendly restaurant has vegan options."*
- Never talk about veganism as a personal choice, or indicate that nonveganism is just as good an action as veganism. Veganism is imperative to seeing animals as equals, and it's our responsibility to not let nonvegans become comfortable with their complacency. *Example: "Veganism is a stance against injustice" instead of "veganism is a personal choice."*

