

## Where did that saying come from?

Many of the sayings we hear today have origins in colonial times. Here are the origins of each of these sayings.

1. "Rule of Thumb" -In colonial times, women were treated as property and you were allowed to beat her with a stick. However, the stick could not be thicker than your thumb. In the end, you could be jailed for breaking the "Rule of thumb"
2. "Loose Woman"- Women wore corsets in those days. They make breathing very difficult and women sometimes passed out because of the lack of air. However, women who didn't tighten their corsets were thought to be morally lacking and therefore a "loose woman"
3. "Straight-Laced"- those that kept their corsets tight and orderly were conversely, straight-laced
4. "Don't flip your wig"- During colonial times, it was customary for a man to tip his hat to a lady he was trying to impress and bow. The fashion of the gentry was to shave your head and wear a wig. Well, some men after tipping their caps would lean too far forward and their wigs would fall off, leading to the warning "Don't flip your wig"
5. "Put your best foot forward"- In colonial times, for a woman looking for a husband, the most important physical feature on a man was his calf muscle. The stockings were designed show off a man's calf. A well-developed muscle showed that they were strong, a good dancer, and that they could support a family. When a man greeted a lady on the street, he put leg with the best looking calf in front of him with the toe pointed, bowed, and tipped his hat in a broad motion by his extended leg to bring attention to it, therefore, putting his "best foot forward." (Men also bought fake "wooden" calf muscles to place in their stockings to make their calves look bigger"
6. "Falling off the wagon" –In colonial times, most serious crimes were punishable by death. You were placed on a wagon and taken to the gallows and a noose was placed around your head. They would simply roll the wagon away so you would "fall off the wagon" to be hanged.
7. "Pulling your leg"- as the criminal was dangling in the noose from the gallows, if the colonials did not feel you were being strangled sufficiently, they would "Pull your leg."
8. "He woke up on the wrong side of the bed"-In colonial times, it was considered bad luck to get up on the left side of the bed. Most beds were pushed to the wall so that it would be impossible to get up on the left side of the bed, thus avoiding the bad luck. So you always want to "wake up on the right side of the bed."
9. "Sleep tight"- beds in colonial times were suspended by a series of ropes. Well, if the ropes were loose, the bed would sag in the middle. You might think this is not a bad thing since you enjoy hammocks. Well, in colonial times, the "inns" of the day provided beds but not private rooms. You may be sleeping with up to 3 or 4 perfect strangers in a bed. If the ropes were loose, then you would all sag together in the middle. The innkeeper would give you a device for tightening the ropes and would exclaim, "sleep tight!" as you went to bed. (Bed bugs are precisely that, that lived in the mattresses)
10. "Ear-marked" –Criminals were sometimes paced in the stocks with their hands or feet locked. Well sometimes the more serious crimes meant that your ears were nailed to the wood. When it was time to be released, they simply ripped you from the nails leaving you "ear marked"
11. "Dog-tired" or "My dogs are tired"-At this time, the best leather was not made from cows, but from dogs. Dog skinned shoes were not uncommon, so if your feet were hurting from a long days' work, your "dogs were tired" or you were "Dog tired."
12. "Old Goat"- many men wore goat hair wigs and those elderly gentlemen were simply called "Old Goats."
13. "Get his Goat"- When you played a prank on someone and stole their goat haired wig, you would say that you "Got their goat."
14. "Pull the Wool over your eyes"- Another saying based on wigs has to do with those made of wool. If you were distracted or fooled, one could say that "the wool was pulled over your eyes"
15. Putting your hand on the Bible and raising your right hand- If a man was granted mercy from the court after a murder or a theft, and not hanged for it, the court would brand the man's right hand with a letter. The letter "M" for murder. The letter "T" for thief. If a man came to court and place his hand on the Bible and raised his right hand with a brand on it, that mean that the individual had already been granted leniency and a guilty verdict meant certain death.