



WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

'Watch My Dust!'

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And now, *Words and Their Stories*, from VOA Learning English.

Dust is very small pieces of earth or other matter. It is so fine it floats in the air. And it gets everywhere.

Inside, it covers our floors, our belongings, and other surfaces. Outside, it covers things as well. And a small wind can blow dust into our eyes and mouth.

When we drive a car on dry ground, it can create a dust cloud. And when we run in a foot race, we can kick up a lot of dust, too.

That is why we have the expression eat my dust. It means you are ahead of someone. They are behind you and must deal with the dust you have made.

Sometimes, we also say watch my dust. This means you are so sure of winning that you are telling others they will lose.

We often use these expressions to talk about a race or a competition.

Using the same reasoning, if you leave someone in the dust, you have left them far behind. Again, you have won some kind of competition and you have won big!

However, if something bites the dust, it has failed.

To bite the dust can mean suffering defeat. It can also mean something comes to an early end or is no longer useful. For example, if my old car dies on a long road trip, I can say my car bit the dust. In the past ten years, many technologies have bitten the dust.

Sometimes, this expression means death in battle. But used this way, bite the dust is very **informal** and not respectful.

Our last “dust” expression is when the dust settles. In a dust storm, it is very difficult to see. When the dust settles, you can finally see clearly.

So, we use this expression to talk about the calm and **clarity** that comes after a big change or time of confusion. We often use it as advice or a warning. It is often a good idea to wait for a situation to calm down before making a big decision.

For example, let’s say you are moving to a new city and changing jobs. You will be very busy. So, you can tell your friends that you will contact them when the dust settles. In other words, you will contact them when things calm down.

And that’s *Words and Their Stories*. Have fun using these “dust” expressions! Until next time ... I’m Anna Matteo.

Anna Matteo wrote this lesson for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

informal – *adj.* suited for use between friends and family but not perhaps professional relationships

clarity – *n.* the quality of being easily seen or heard

We want to hear from you. Do you have a similar expression in your language? In the Comments section, you can also practice using any of the expressions from the story.

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