



## WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

# Make Your Home 'Spick-and-Span'

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

On this program, we explore words and expressions in the English language. We give definitions, examples, and notes on usage. And sometimes we use them in conversations.

Today, we talk about an expression to describe something, like a home, a vehicle, or an extremely clean object. The expression is spick-and-span.

Word experts are not sure where spick-and-span came from. But they agree that the expression was first used in *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* in 1665: “My Lady Batten walking through the dirty lane with new spick-and-span white shoes...”

If your shoes are so white and so clean, we can call them spick-and-span. We might even say they look brand spanking new.

If spick-and-span and brand spanking new are too long and you want to use just one word, here is a good one: immaculate. If something is immaculate, it is completely and totally clean. It is spotless, meaning it does not have one single imperfection, bad mark, or **blemish**.

Our living spaces as well as our appearance and our clothes can be called immaculate. However, spick-and-span is commonly used to describe spaces. And an American company even smartly named their cleaning product *Spic and Span*. That is “spic” without the letter “k.”

As far as usage, spick-and-span, immaculate, and spotless can be used in any situation. Brand spanking new is a bit more **casual**.

Now, let’s hear the expression spick-and-span used in a couple of examples.

*After the birthday party, my house was a disaster. So, I spent hours cleaning it, and by the end of the day, it was spick-and-span. You couldn't even tell there had been a party!*

*My co-worker wants everything to be immaculate. Even if I think the office is spick-and-span, she will still find something else to clean.*

And that's all the time we have for this *Words and Their Stories*.

Practice using the expression spick-and-span the next time you want to describe something very clean.

Until next time ... I'm Anna Matteo.

*Anna Matteo wrote this lesson for VOA Learning English.*

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## Words in This Story

**blemish** – *n.* a mark that makes something imperfect

**casual** – *adj.* suited for ordinary or everyday use

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

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