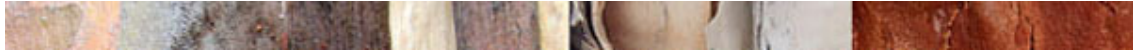


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Oxford Word of the Month – December: flog

noun: (derogatory) a pretentious or conceited person; a fool.

THE STORY BEHIND THE WORD OF THE MONTH

A reader's comment, published in a community newspaper in 2012, uses the word **flog** as an insult: 'Lazy Phoners: If you use your hands-free on the phone when your hands are free, you're a **flog**.' (Brisbane *MX*, 10 October) Whether you are familiar with the word or not, it's clear that **flog** is a term of abuse. A more recent use in a regional newspaper confirms this:

I hope they throw the book at the halfwit, way to go moron, you have done much damage to the image of the industry, just so you could show everyone how much of a flog you are. (Ipswich Advertiser, 10 August 2018)

The word **flog** is a derogatory term to describe a person considered to be pretentious, conceited or foolish, and evidence suggests it is Australian. One of the earliest examples of this sense of **flog** occurs in a 2006 posting on the online site *Urban Dictionary*. A contributor lists a number of meanings for **flog**, including this one with an illustrative sentence: '**flog** ... (noun) a poser, someone who likes to big-note themselves ... *Look at that wanker in the Porsche talking on his car phone. What a flog.*'

The contributor's comments suggests the new sense of **flog** is related to the verb *flog* meaning 'to masturbate'. The 'masturbate' sense of *flog* can be traced back to the early 1940s, with its corresponding agent noun *flogger* emerging later. These terms are synonymous with *wank* and *wanker*, with roughly the same mid-20th century dates of first usage. In Australian usage, the noun *wank* means 'a pretentious person or thing; pretentiousness'. **Flog** has evolved with a similar emphasis on pretentiousness.

Flog is often found on online sporting forums and comments pages, particularly in the context of AFL and Rugby League. For example, one AFL player from Melbourne's most affluent suburb was concerned that his new Collingwood teammates would prejudge him:

First impressions are pretty crucial, I know if Bucks said the day before I walked in 'this bloke is from Toorak' they would think 'this bloke is going to be a flog'. (Melbourne *Age*, 14 March 2014)

While it is common in sporting contexts, there is evidence that **flog** has also found its way into mainstream usage, as in this example from a political journalist:

There was some silly criticism this week that the tax cut debate sunk like a stone in the media cycle because Hockey failed to provide enough detail to his tax plan. Rubbish. It's just that the bloke sounds like a flog. When did a lack of policy detail ever stop Keating or Costello prosecuting an economic argument? Never. (Sydney Daily Telegraph, 30 August 2015)

Flog will be considered for inclusion in the next edition of *The Australian National Dictionary*.

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