

UH-HUH

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"An interjection used to indicate an affirmative answer." So defines the Random House Dictionary. It also defines "uh-uh" as the opposite of "uh-huh". Webster's Second defines it in almost the same words but does not define "uh-uh". The Oxford English Dictionary defines neither word but does define "uh". American Heritage simply ignores the whole thing.

When I was quite young, I spent much time standing on street corners girl-watching. When a particularly attractive one walked by, I would murmur "Uh-huuuh!" That meant, "Ain't she something!"

I met my wife on a blind date. The next day a friend asked me, "How did you like Geneva?"

"A most attractive girl," I replied. "Very intelligent and a brilliant conversationalist."

"That's funny. You did all the talking. All she said was 'uh-huh'."

But that "uh-huh" meant "I'm listening", "Very true" and "How interesting".

Over forty years later, I will get up from a breakfast of ham, eggs, hominy grits, and hot biscuits. I will pat my well-developed fundament and remark, "Tomorrow, I'm going on a diet."

To which Geneva replies, "Uh-huh", meaning "Neither of us believes a word of that."

Or she will work a good part of the morning fixing a pot of chili. After it has simmered several hours, it becomes rich and thick and spicy. I dip up a bowl, smell it, then put a big spoonful into my mouth. As I savor its multiplicity of tastes, I exclaim "Uh-huh!!" It means, "This is absolutely delicious."

Dr. Urdang is to be congratulated on including this fine word in his dictionary. But I suggest that when he comes out with a new edition, he consult with my wife for alternate definitions.