

Tektolio™ Glossary

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A^b Cowbell

You've heard cowbells. Okay, you've heard *of* them, at least? (I grew up in Connecticut with cowpastures just down the street). Well, this one happens to be tuned to A^b (that's A-flat, for the non-musical among us). I've heard tell that in the Alps, the cowbells are all tuned to the same key, sort of like a church carillon hung on a herd.

Anvil

The big weird-shaped heavy thing on which blacksmiths hammer horseshoes, about which Verdi wrote a chorus for *Il Trovatore*, and that cartoon characters are fond of dropping on each other.

Ball Bearings

Those little spherical steel things drenched in oil that make roller skate wheels and jet engines rotate more easily. We used to collect them, clean them off and play marbles with them, too.

Bed Pan

A medical implement used by bed-bound patients to collect... well, not 'collect' as in baseball cards or stamps, but to catch... and prevent... stainage and damage, from... you know... waste material — jeez, do I have to spell it all out? — produced by bodily functions. So there.

Bellows

Built on the same principle as a concertina or accordion, this particular implement is used to pump air into blacksmiths' forges (see Anvil) to make the fire burn hotter; on a smaller scale, folks use bellowses on regular fires-in-the-fireplace on cold winter nights.

Bridle & Bit

Leather & metal trappings that go over a horse's head (bridle) and in his mouth (bit, presumably because somebody got bit the first time a wild horse was subjected to such indignity), to which the steering devices (reins) are attached.

Carpenter's Plane

Hand-held tool, sort of like an endways cheese slicer, that woodworkers use when a larger saw, say a two-man (which see) or table, would be overkill. A plane shaves off thin strips of wood... like a cheese slicer.

Chemical Canned Heat

Just what it sounds like. We used to use it on our backpack trips in New Hampshire, in a little snap-together stove, to cook with. As I recall, it was purple and rubbery and had a petroleum kind of shine to it. Very weird stuff.

Forked Stick

When I came up with this one, I had in mind a dowsing rod that mystical scientists or scientific mystics use to detect water (called "dowsing," though if they're successful it might be a "dousing," too). The stick reputedly points to water hidden underground. Never seen it done myself.

Gurney

Another medical implement, a rolling metal bed kind of thing (with clamps and stuff for IV lines) that interns and paramedics use to transport patients from here to there. Watch one of those innumerable hospital dramas on television and you'll see a few.

Hibachi

Very simply, a tabletop grill. Half the time and effort of a full-sized grill, and you can set it right on your tabletop, as long as you have burn-resistant material to set it on, and aren't using it indoors. Grill safely.

Hot Water Bottle

A Victorian invention, I think. It's a creepy rubber thing (well, maybe they weren't rubber in Victoria's day, but the one we had when I was a kid sure was... yecch). It was filled with hot water and tucked under the bedclothes at the foot of the bed to warm the tootsies on cold winter nights (I in my kerchief and Ma in her cap sort of thing).

Jumper Cables

A pair of connected cables with alligator clips (just what they sound like) two of which are attached to the positive and negative terminals of the battery of a car that won't start and the other pair on corresponding battery terminals of a car that already is running, so the working car can give the non-working car an electrical "jump-start" — hence the name.

Maracas

South American or Caribbean percussion instruments, generally gourds filled with sand or pebbles, brightly painted, with handles. Shake, rattle and roll, baby.

Nunchuks

Not sure this is spelled correctly, or if there is a correct spelling; I've seen several. I know them as ninja weapons, a couple of wooden handles linked with a length of chain.

Opera Glasses

Mini-binoculars, popular in British theatres and at American racetracks.

Oriental Fan

Someone used this once to propel a jerry-rigged vehicle. I hadn't the heart to tell her it's made of painted bamboo and powered by hand, not an electrical device that would drive, say, a girl on rollerblades holding up a bedsheet. "I just bladed in from Chicago under oriental fan power, and boy are my arms tired...."

Panniers

Any old prospector out there'll tell ya that it's woven baskets that hang over a pack animal's back (donkey, burro, llama, rambunctious nephew, etc.) to carry vittles and such in. Jackass saddlebags, yee-ha!

Pole Vaulting Pole

Does this have a special name? Anybody...?

Radio Console

I remember my dad telling me my uncle built one of these back in the 40s. It's basically a table-sized boom box. I wonder if Uncle Addison would be building computers these days.

Rubber Chicken

Just threw this one in for fun . . . o come on, take a wild guess!

Soldering Iron

A tool that is heated (like a curling iron, but I guess in the old days they just stuck the tip of it into the fire) and used to melt and apply a metal alloy (tin and lead, or copper and zinc) called solder (pronounced "sodder," because we borrowed the word from the French and, of course, mispronounced it) to fasten together or connect two other metal things.

Stanchion

Big hanging metal things that clamp around a cow's neck to keep her from kickin' ya while you're milking her. Bovine handcuffs, in a sense.

Tackle Box

A box, usually with a handle and hinged lid, that holds tackle. Fishing, that is; sinkers and hooks and flies, rubber worms and jitterbugs, all designed to lure fish out of their native habitat and onto your hibachi.

Two-Man Saw

A saw, somewhat square-shaped, with handles at top and bottom of either side and the sawblade as the lower edge. It was used, as the name indicates, by woodsmen or loggers working as a team. There was also a longer version called a pit saw, used on logs propped across a hole in the ground, with a man below and another above.

Victrola

Few of us remember stereo turntables, much less solid-state record players or crank-up Victrolas that were popular around the turn of the century (the 19th into the 20th, that is). Sometimes built right into their own table, Victrolas had the signature bell-like horn that projected sound (remember the RCA Victor mascot dog Nipper looking at that weird thing? — that was a Victrola).

Wind Sock

Open-ended tubes of fabric stuck on a pole. I'm not sure exactly what they do other than tell you which way the wind is blowing (yet, if it's a strong enough wind to fill a sock, why would you not be able to tell the direction it's blowing simply by standing in it for a minute?). Can anyone elaborate?

If you can clarify, correct or add to any of these definitions, please e-mail us: whatthe@oktabo.com and we'll update the Glossary periodically.