

Home Words: snapshot word list

Celebrating multilingual Birmingham

The Home Words campaign asked young people and adults all over Birmingham to share special words from their home languages. People submitted words from foreign and heritage languages, regional dialects and slang, and their diverse hobbies and interests. Over 400 words were submitted to the campaign, representing 75 languages: from Arabic to Yoruba via Brummie!

Word list

This PDF provides *a snapshot* of the submissions: **30 of the over 400 words** people sent to the campaign.

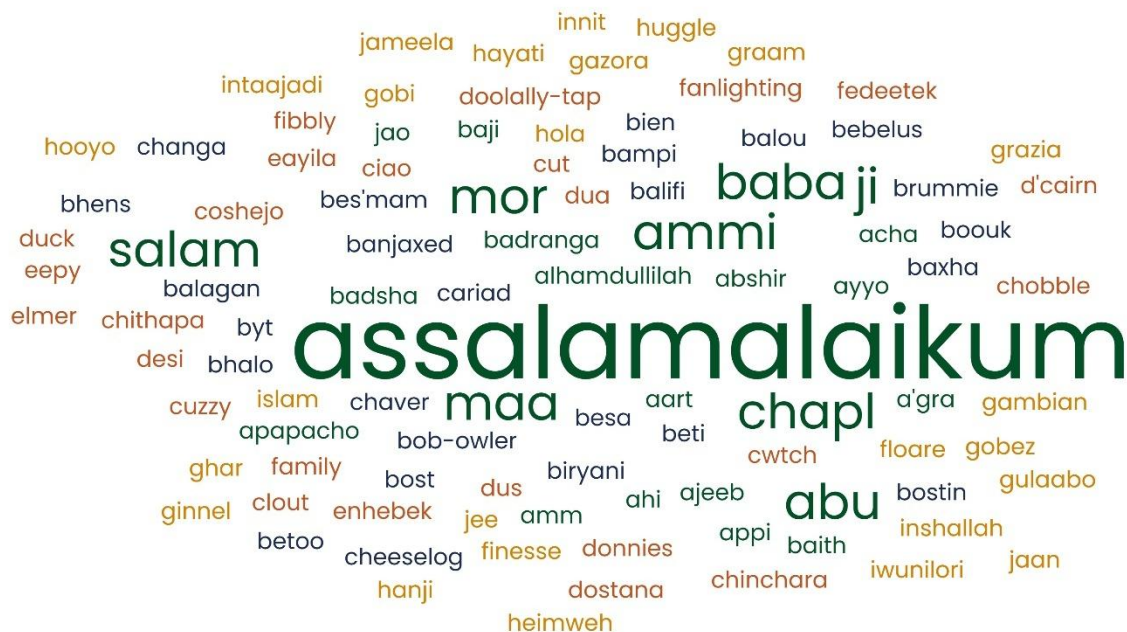
- Share a word you submitted with friends and family members
- Learn more about Birmingham’s thriving multilingual culture
- Write a poem using some of the ‘Home Words’ (see the worksheet on our website to support!)

We have also created a full word list – presented as a spreadsheet – and a poetry-writing worksheet. You can access these resources on our website.



Scan the QR to access more
‘Home Words’ resources

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/communities/birmingham/home-words/>



Word	Meaning (in participant's own words)	Why is the word important to the participant?	Language, dialect, hobby or other place the word is from	Name of person who submitted the word
Abu	Dad	How else am I going to say 'my dad'?	Arabic	(Anonymous)
Acha	'Yes', 'ok', 'good', 'really?'. It features in so many contexts, from agreeing with something, to describing food/ clothes/ anything, to a question that asks for elaboration or as a sarcastic 'really?'.	Being born and bred in the UK, my mother tongue is important to me as a connection to my heritage. However, my spoken Punjabi is not great but I can get by using a few key phrases/ words. 'Acha' is one of them and I have used it in so many contexts: it always raises a smile with other speakers of Punjabi as a commonality between us and an indication of shared history/ heritage. One word but it means so much!	Punjabi	Nosheen Qamer
Ackee (123)	When playing games as children (such as hide and seek) shouting 'Ackee 123' and someone's name signified someone was out.	Brings back pleasant memories of playing games as a child.	West Midlands	David Coombes
Amaiti marrum inarkam	Peace and harmony (அமைதி மற்றும் இணக்கம்)	The whole world is fighting and Sri Lanka. This word shows a will that the world will stop fighting for once and for all.	Tamil	Jashvita Santhosh
Apapacho	To hug with the soul.	It's a Nahuatl word, a language spoken in my country, Mexico.	Nahuatl (Mexico)	Tatiana Reyna
Baba	Dad/Daddy	In our country, people call their fathers 'daddy' and some people call their son 'daddy' with love. I call my son 'dad' because my father died when I was 2 years old. When I call him 'dad' I think of my father.	South Asian	(Anonymous)
Banjaxed	Broken, ruined	It's a word I hear my uncle and cousins use a lot on their farm, usually in relation to equipment and machinery that is no longer working but also in relation to themselves when they are tired in the evenings.	Irish-English (not Gaelic)	Emma Joyce
Bob-owler	A big fat moth that bumps into the window and wakes you up at night.	Reminds me of being fascinated by them as a child. Now I would know they are probably hawkmoths. I thought the 'owler' bit meant they were the size of an owl, but have since been told it's actually 'owler'.	West Midlands	Juliette Green

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Chapl	Slipper	To kill bugs or to walk around.	Urdu	Mohammad
Chinchara	Bird	I love this word. I love how it sounds when you say it fluently. It's a collective word meaning 'birds', but I find it so cute and musical. Sometimes I call my granddaughter 'Chinchara'. 'My little bird'.	Pashto	Haleema
Cwtch	Welsh word meaning a good, long, comforting cuddle.	Cwtch makes me feel safe and warm, and conveys a depth of affection (platonic).	Welsh	(Anonymous)
Daak naam	Nickname	<p>Like most Bengali's, I have acquired multiple 'daak naam' over the years, almost one from each family member. None of these bear any resemblance to my legal name. They can each be traced back to an obscure inside joke, accidental mispronunciation, or affectionately arbitrary term meaning anything from "jewel" to "sky" to "mirror".</p> <p>I find it beautiful that Bengali culture has such a distinctive approach to name-giving. Since these names endure in conversation rather than writing, they are inherently transient and lack the stifling permanence of a legal name. Many of my 'daak naam' have fallen out of use, simply due to circumstance. I will never get to hear my late grandfather call me "Dutu" again, and there will be a day when my grandmother can no longer call me her precious gemstone.</p> <p>I could not tell you which one of my names I resonate with the most; only that it is a privilege to exist in the voices of so many.</p>	Bengali	Iona Mandal
Fanlighting	Signalling to others that it's time they left.	On a 1950s caravan holiday, my father-in-law wanted to get rid of visitors who had overstayed their welcome. He	Family word	(Anonymous)

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		got up and closed the top windows saying "I always do this just before I go to bed!"		
Gulaabo	Rosy cheeks	This is what I call my 2-year-old niece.	Urdu	Shumaila Ali
Hooyo Macaan	My sweet Mom	My sweet Mommy is a very special word to me. It is heartwarming to be called 'hooyo macaan' by my own children and I called my own mom this too.	Somali	(Anonymous)
Huggle	A mixture of hug and snuggle	It's the time we snuggle up together and spend time together.	Family word	Charlotte
Hui Jia	Come back home	We say it because we want to go back home, we like it in Birmingham but we miss home.	Chinese	Jingyi Gao
Kidiba	'Kidiba' refers to someone who doesn't pay attention to the things around them.	When I went to school, my parents told me not to be 'kidiba' in class and on the way, because this could affect my academic results.	Lingala	Fabrice
Liming	'Liming' is a term in Trinidad and Tobago that means to hang or chill out with friends in a casual setting.	Being British of Indo-Caribbean descent, just to hear a word from where my family comes from gives me a sense of joy and belonging. It recalls happy memories of "liming" with friends and family back in Trinidad on my visits, the smell of mangos and doubles and the sound of soca music.	Trinidad and Tobago	Vashti Bejai
Mehr مهر	It's in the language Farsi. It encompasses feelings of love, kindness, and compassion. It's often linked to the warmth of the sun, as in 'Mehrtab', which means 'sunlight'. The word also reflects the care and tenderness one feels toward others. Mehr represents the bond that ties communities and families together.	Learning the word 'mehr' connects you not just to the language, but to the essence of our Afghan culture where warmth and generosity reign supreme.	Farsi	Anushka

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Nazr	'Evil eye'. When someone views your successes enviously and then that causes your downfall/failures later on. Or, when you flaunt something (i.e. wealth) excessively and it's removed from your life.	As I started to live my life more privately and share my achievements with a select few, I learnt that a private life was better. This word, for me, reinforces humility and privacy in modern society.	Arabic	(Anonymous)
Pamoja	It means 'together' in Swahili.	Pamoja' is all about unity and togetherness. It's a word that reminds us we're connected, even when we go our separate ways. These days, it's often used casually at the end of conversations, like saying, 'Alright then, pamoja! It's a simple but powerful way of saying 'we're still in this together', no matter where we are.	Swahili	Linda Odongo
Rujai	'Duvet' or 'quilt'	<p>Although I remember little-to-no Punjabi now, before starting school we grew up using Punjabi and English interchangeably at home.</p> <p>I actually was in secondary school when I mentioned the word 'rujai' and suddenly all of my white classmates looked at me. It's a very odd feeling talking about something which everyone has, but no-one knows what you're talking about! It was only then that I realised I had assumed 'rujai' was the English word (ironic as the word 'duvet' is French anyway!) and I had never actually learned the word 'duvet'. This word in itself feels cosy and homely and a far better fit than 'duvet'. My partner is white English and she's incorporated this into her language now too instead of the word 'duvet'!</p>	Punjabi	Alex Johl
Sonyachno - сонячно	Sunny. It describes a condition of weather and memory from childhood and also it associates with sunflowers.	Memory from childhood - sunny day, afternoon about 3pm the field of sunflowers and sunshine. It is more about the feeling of being safe, home, and happy.	Ukrainian	Vitalii Kuzliaieu

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Sweats	Sweats' is a synonym for 'hardcore players'; however, it is simpler.	The word is important in games like Fortnite, as if someone is attacking me who is really good at the game, I can ask my teammates for help with a phrase like 'sweat's on me!'	Gaming slang	(Anonymous)
Тепло – тепло	Warmth. A feeling of comfort, love and closeness especially when surrounded by family and loved ones. It represents both physical warmth and emotional warmth – the sense of belonging, care and affection we experience in the presence of those who matter most.	Warmth is more than just temperature. It's the feeling of being home, safe and loved. It's the laughter around the dinner table, a hug from a loved one and the deep connection shared with family. No matter where life takes us, warmth reminds us of the people and places that truly make us feel at home.	Ukrainian	Nataliia Nichveda
Traabit	A Black Country mix of 'Tra' (meaning goodbye) and 'A bit' (meaning see you in a bit)	Our Great Grandma always said this to us when we said "goodbye". She always said that "goodbye" seemed like a permanent thing, whereas "a bit" meant you will see each other soon. I now say it to my family, and they have now adopted it and use it now.	West Midlands	Alex Howell
Tumi ze shundur Amma	It means 'you are so beautiful, mum'.	It shows I appreciate my mom, she's loving and caring which makes her beautiful.	Bengali	Mohammed Amir
Wollmilchschein	Literally meaning 'wool milk pig' it is an expression for something or someone who just does and encompasses everything you might want from that item or person (mostly used for things but can apply to people as well)	Whilst long and a classic German compound word, it is sometimes just the right word to express what you have or are looking for. I like the factual nonsense and the fact it is mostly used with a smile. The advanced version, by the way, is 'eierlegendes Wollmilchschwein' i.e. 'egg laying wool milk pig'!	German	Anna Wittkop
Ystävä on tärkein, kiitos että olet	A friend is the most important, thank you for being you'.	Friends are the most important people in life because they provide unwavering support, companionship, understanding and joy; helping you navigate life's up and downs, combat loneliness and boost your overall wellbeing.	Finnish	Rose Elia