

## Words and Their Stories: Down to Earth

Now, the VOA Special English program WORDS AND THEIR STORIES.

Every week at this time, we tell about popular American words and expressions. Some of these are very old. Some are new. Together, they form the living speech of the American people.

Today we tell about the expression "**down to earth.**" Down to earth means being open and honest. It is easy to deal with someone who is down to earth.

A person who is down to earth is a pleasure to find. He or she accepts other people as equals. A down to earth person is the opposite of someone who acts important or proud.

Down to earth people could be important members of society. But they do not consider themselves to be better than others who are less important. They do not let their importance "**go to their heads.**" Someone who lets something go to his head feels he is better than others. He has a "**big head.**"

A person who is filled with his own importance and pride is said to have "**his nose in the air.**" Often the person who has a big head and his nose in the air has no reason to feel better than others. He surely is the opposite of someone who is down to earth.

Americans use another expression that is similar in some ways to down to earth. The expression is "**both feet on the ground.**" Some one with both feet on the ground is a person with a good understanding of reality. She has what is called "**common sense.**" She may have dreams. But she does not allow them to block her understanding of what is real.

The opposite kind of person is one who has his "**head in the clouds.**" Someone with his head in the clouds is a person whose mind is not on what is happening in real life. Such a person may be called a "**daydreamer.**"

Sometimes a person with his head in the clouds can be brought back to reality. Sharp words from a teacher, for example, can usually get a daydreaming student to put "both feet on the ground."

The person who is down to earth usually has both feet on the ground. But the opposite is not always true. Someone with both feet on the ground may not be as open and easy to deal with as someone who is down to earth.

When we have both our feet firmly on the ground, and when we are down to earth we do not have our noses in the air. We act honestly and openly to others. Our lives are like the ground below us – solid and strong.