



American Expression E1257 I call shotgun

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

"I call shotgun" is a popular and informal expression used in the context of riding in a vehicle, typically a car. When someone says, "I call shotgun," they are essentially claiming the front passenger seat for themselves before anyone else can occupy it. This phrase is often used among friends or family members when getting ready to embark on a car trip.

The origin of this expression is somewhat unclear, but it is believed to have emerged in the United States during the mid-20th century. The term "shotgun" itself likely stems from the days of stagecoaches and Old West, where the person sitting next to the driver held a shotgun to protect against potential threats or attacks. Over time, this practice evolved into a customary and playful way of determining who gets to sit in the coveted front seat of a car.

The act of calling shotgun is usually carried out in a lighthearted and informal manner. When a group of people is preparing to go somewhere by car, one individual may shout "I call shotgun!" or simply "Shotgun!" to declare their intention to occupy the front seat. It's often seen as a race to be the first to claim the seat, and the first person to call it typically gets to sit there, provided they are ready to go when the trip begins.

In addition to being a fun and spontaneous way to determine seating arrangements, calling shotgun has become a sort of social tradition or game among friends and family. It adds an element of excitement and competition to the process of deciding who sits where in the car, especially for young passengers. This playful ritual can be a source of laughter and camaraderie before the journey begins.

It's important to note that while calling shotgun is a common practice in many informal settings, it may not always be appropriate or necessary. In more formal or organized situations, seating arrangements are typically predetermined or assigned by the driver or organizer. Additionally, for safety reasons, it's crucial that the person sitting in the front passenger seat complies with seatbelt laws and other regulations, as well as ensures that they are not obstructing the driver's view.

In conclusion, "I call shotgun" is a playful and informal expression used to claim the front passenger seat in a car before embarking on a trip. While its origins may be rooted in historical practices, it has evolved into a fun and lighthearted way for friends and family to determine seating arrangements. This expression adds an element of excitement and competition to the pre-trip process and can contribute to a sense of camaraderie among passengers. However, it's essential to use it responsibly and in compliance with safety regulations when traveling by car.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some common strategies or tactics people use when they want to call shotgun, and have you ever employed any of these techniques successfully?
 2. How does the practice of calling shotgun reflect social dynamics and relationships within a group of friends or family members? Are there unwritten rules or expectations associated with it?
 3. Have you ever encountered a situation where a dispute or disagreement arose over who had the right to call shotgun, and how was it resolved? What impact, if any, did it have on the mood of the group?
 4. In some cultures or regions, the concept of calling shotgun may not be as prevalent or recognized. How do cultural differences influence the way people determine seating arrangements in a car, and have you encountered any interesting variations?
 5. Can you share a memorable or humorous experience related to calling shotgun or observing others do so? How did it add to the enjoyment or anticipation of the upcoming car ride?
-