

The origin and history of the phrase ok

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Some jargon becomes antiquated after a few years, but one term withstood the test of time. Before OK arrived at the meaning it has today, it had numerous other connotations. Perhaps OK is the longest running joke in the history of comedy. In a short video by Vox, the origins of OK are discussed in both an informative and entertaining format. The video is geared toward everyone, but is possibly focused on young people because of the fun format and it is an online video. Prior to the term's popularity today, "OK actually traces back to an 1830's fad of intentionally misspelling abbreviations. Young intellectual types in Boston delighted those in the know with butchered-coded messages such as KC- Knuff Ced, or KY or Know Yuse. All correct used to confirm everything was in order".

The term OK was spread quickly through media, technology and is still popular today as it is a multifunction word and is used as a neutral affirmative. The grounds for the emergence of the word OK are found in the use of newspaper articles, presidential campaigns, and advertisements. The phrase OK first gained popularity when it was printed in a newspaper article around 1839 where, for the first time outside small groups of intellectuals, the phrase was used for the public and spelled out: o. k. – oll korrekt. Shortly after this word was repeated and shared over and over again, the story of its beginning was forgotten.

In 1965, Pete Seeger released the song "All Mixed up" in which he states one of the mythological origins of OK coming from the Choctaw word oke which means "so it is". However, it should be noted that the archives have the original newspaper article clearly disproving Seeger's understanding of the origins. During an election campaign for presidency, Martin Van Buren,
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from Kinderhook, New York, used the abbreviation ok synonymous with his campaign slogan- Van Buren is oll right, from old kinderhook. This trendy campaign slogan eventually backfired and Van Buren was not re-elected as the people found fault in his beliefs. Due to the presidential campaign being publicized nationally, the idea of ok was spread quickly. One claim that the video makes is that decades after the presidential campaign, ok continued to gain popularity for the unique look of the abbreviation.

Beginning in the 1920's advertisement companies started using a " k" instead of " c" to make the advertisement stand out. Because ' k' is not used very often to start a word, the letter stands apart from ads that would typically use a ' c' for the hard ' k' sound the " k would catch the eye of the viewers, making the ad more memorable. The tactic of using k instead of c is still used as a visual strategy today. For example: Kraft, Kleenex, Krispy Kreme". With the development of technology, the term ok has been brought with the changing devices. First connected with technology when the term was used over telegraph messages, the dots and dashes of OK were unmistakable over any other combination of letters to confirm messages. OK is found on menu options to confirm an action, it is used in Alexa and other smart speakers, and even on buttons on printers. Furthermore, one warrant from this argument is " OK might be the most recognizable word on the planet, it's essential for how we communicate with each other and with our technology. " This is partially due to it's pronunciation being similar in over 20 languages. The other part is in the context of the situation.

While studying abroad, I heard the term OK used in at least seven different languages as OK can confirm, represent acknowledgement in a conversation, affirm, or demonstrate understanding. As the term has such a diverse, non-judgmental meanings, it is effective to use it to communicate and assert points of comprehension. Additionally, the word OK is embedded in our culture and most likely applied in everyday situation without recognizing it's prominence. However, there are many variations that are used: ok, okay, o.k. , okey dokey, alright, all right, all correct, having different denotations but the context of the word is always understood. Another warrant of this topic is that many people do not consider one moment in history that ok was adopted into our language, but rather assume it's origin has some beginning in a different language. In reality, the emergence of OK was propelled forward by multiple uses of technology and media.

In conclusion, the phrase is still popular today as it's all purpose, neutral affirmative. Looking at how each component of the Toulmin model shows how persuasive the grounds, claims, and warrants of this video are on the subject of ok. It is revealed that through the development of media and technology the term ok has remained in our everyday language usage. Whether using a personal device, speaking in conversation, listening to lectures, or clocking into work, the term OK has been forever ingrained into culture and communication. One understanding the Toulmin model may have inhibited is the rebuttal. Maybe the word OK came from a different region of the world. The video does not address the other myths of origin for the word besides the popular story of the word coming from the Choctaw word " oke. " Further research revealed that other myths include the term

OK being used in military code, mispronunciation from West African, Scottish, or Greek words. Therefore, the Toulmin model falls short in explaining the other aspects of the argument that were not mentioned. Sometimes unsaid information does not fit nicely in a certain category. Despite the origins of ok being debateable, the undeniable truth is that that term is used every day and sustained the test of time because of its versatility.