

Uncensored English: kick-ass show notes

This podcast covers the phrase *to kick (someone's / something's) ass* and *kick-ass* as an adjective. First we need to talk about the *ass* part. It can refer to a real ass (butt or bum), but usually the is metaphorical. That is, it's not a question of a real-world, physical ass; the ass stands for something else. In fact, all usages of *kick ass* that don't involve a physical foot connecting to a physical ass are metaphorical figures of speech. For example, "We got our ass(es) kicked in the football game last night" means "The other team beat us by a good margin." It's unlikely that any team member's ass actually had contact with a foot.



ass

The expression *kick ass* is used as an adjective and in verb phrases. First we'll look at the verbs.

Transitive use in verb phrases

To kick someone's/something's ass = to punish someone using physical force, or to beat them in a physical fight.

In a fight, Madonna would totally *kick Britney's ass*.

If they got in a fight, Britney would *get her ass kicked* by Madonna.

Linda Hamilton might *kick Madonna's ass* if they got in a fight.

If you steal my chocolate, I'll *kick your ass*!

I'm not sure if I feel sorry for Paris Hilton, or if I want to *kick her ass*.



Would Madonna kick Linda Hamilton's ass in a fight?

If something kicks your ass, it can mean that it defeats you or causes you great difficulty. It doesn't have to be a person.

The TOEFL test totally *kicked my ass*; it was much harder than I thought.

My first marathon totally *kicked my ass*, but at least I made it to the finish line.

Intransitive* use in verb phrases

To kick ass = to win, to succeed, to perform well, to be very good at something, to be superior to others. It's synonymous with other slang expressions like "to rule" or "to own."

Britney sucks, but Madonna kicks ass!

Madonna kicked ass at the concert last night.

Google kicks ass for quick'n'dirty language research.

Thanks to Better at English, my English *kicks ass*!

A: "Are you ready to climb Mt. Everest?" B: "Yeah, let's go *kick ass*!"

The intransitive use can also mean "to fight," "to physically beat someone," or "to beat someone up."

I'm in the mood for a fight. Let's go kick some ass.

Adjective = excellent, superior, exciting, fun, impressive (or other adjectives denoting strong approval or positive qualities)

kick-ass (or *kickass*)

That was a *kick-ass* party last night.

Rammstein put on the most *kick-ass* concert I've ever seen.

If you want to see some truly *kick-ass* presentation videos, go to the [TED talks website](#).

Variations

In verb phrases you can substitute the word *butt* for *ass*. For example, "My new dictionary totally *kicks butt*." But it's very unusual to use "kick butt" as an adjective.

 I bought a ~~kick-but~~ new dictionary.

 I bought a *kick-ass* new dictionary.

Social register and appropriateness

Finally, *kick-ass* is a fairly harmless informal expression (about on the same level as *damn* or *hell*), but not everyone is as liberal as Lori is when it comes to swear words. So you should be careful about how you use it. You shouldn't use it in formal situations or among people who you know disapprove of slang and swear words.

*Here we treat *to kick ass* as a single unit of meaning, as there is no object getting its ass kicked in examples such as "Madonna kicks ass." However, some might argue that it is the transitive verb *to kick*, and that the *ass* is the object.
