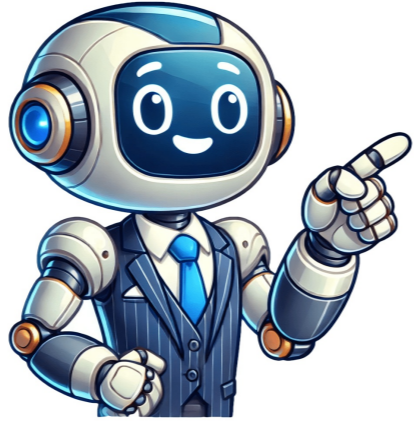


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What is the difference between 'for sale' and 'on sale'? See a translation Hide translation Report copyright infringement There are many English expressions with similar words that can mean slightly different things. One example of this is the pair of terms "for sale" and "on sale." Both are related to the sale of products, but they have different meanings and usages. This article will explain the differences between the two and will demonstrate the correct ways to use them both. Let's have a look! "For sale" is a common expression used to indicate that an item is available for purchase. It is often used in advertisements for expensive things like cars and houses. That house is for sale for \$500,000. My car is for sale for \$35,000. That shop has rare antiques for sale. "On sale" is also used to refer to the purchase of goods. However, it also indicates that an item has a reduced price. This is often used in special promotions and is usually accompanied by a discount rate or the amount of money a buyer can save compared to the original price. These shoes are on sale for 20% off. All of the Christmas decorations go on sale in January. Everything in this section is on sale this week. Pick any three items for only \$20. As we mentioned before, "for sale" indicates that an item is available for purchase, while "on sale" indicates that an item is available for purchase at a lower price than usual. These are close but not exactly the same! In other words, just because something is for sale doesn't mean it's also on sale. The items in this case aren't for sale.(not available) That game has been \$60 ever since it was released. It never goes on sale.(available, but only at the original price) Also mentioned earlier, "for sale" is often used for large or expensive items, while "on sale" is common for everyday items and things that are likely to be discounted. That house has been for sale since last year. This jacket is on sale for half-price. Should I get it? Finally, "for sale" is usually used with the verb "be." On the other hand, "on sale" can be used with both "be" and "go." Everything is for sale except the items behind the counter. Are these paintings for sale? Those clothes are from last season, so they are on sale for 40% off. Do you think these will go on sale in the future? In some situations, "go on sale" simply means "become available for purchase" and does not indicate a reduced price. This usage is common when an item is not available yet but will be in the future, and when only a limited number of items will be available, such as concert tickets. It hasn't gone on sale yet. Sign up for our mailing list and we'll let you know when it's available. She's a very popular singer, so you should be ready to buy tickets as soon as they go on sale. Understanding the difference between "for sale" and "on sale" will help make English advertisements and sales promotions clearer to you. Whether you are trying to buy a house, a new pair of shoes or just snacks at a convenience store, it's important to be comfortable with these everyday English expressions. If you'd like to learn about the differences between other similar vocabulary, we have an article all about them: What's the Difference Between These English Words? This article was adapted from an original written by Sana Both "on sale" and "for sale" are correct phrases, but they are used in different contexts. "On sale" is used to indicate that something is being sold at a reduced price or is available for purchase, typically in a retail setting. On the other hand, "for sale" is used to indicate that something is available to be bought, without necessarily implying a discount.Last updated: March 25, 2024 • 1155 views A reader asks,When do you use the expression "for sell" instead of "for sale"?Short answer: Never.ESL learners must be puzzled when they see ads like these on the Web:I have a nice Play Station 3 drum set for sell for 35 dollars.We have a wristband for sell for \$100 in the Des Moines, Ames, Carroll, Denison region of Iowa.Find out if there are other products like yours already for sell.Cheap Authentic (unused) Cartridges for SellSell is a verb. Sale is a noun. Something that someone wants to sell is "for sale." "Purebred Border Collie Puppies for SaleGently Used Clothing for SaleReliable Used Cars for SaleThe expression "on sale" may also present a little confusion to ESL speakers.Sometimes "on sale" means that items for sale are being sold at a price lower than normal:Prices slashed: all jump drives on sale at half price!This weekend only: premium mowers on sale at 20% off!When "on sale" is preceded by go, no drop in price is implied. "To go on sale" means "to become available for purchase".Ticket packages offer the exclusive ability to select tickets before they go on sale (i.e., before people who don't have ticket packages are allowed to buy them.)An iPhone with a Sapphire Screen May Go on Sale Soon (i.e., it may soon be possible to buy an iPhone with a sapphire screen)When will Google Glass finally go on sale? (i.e., when will Google Glass be available for purchase by consumers?)"For Sale" and "On Sale" have their uses, but "For Sell" is an unfortunate error. When it comes to buying or selling items, the terms "for sale" and "on sale" are often used interchangeably. However, there is a subtle difference between the two phrases that can cause confusion.According to Merriam-Webster, "for sale" means that an item is available for purchase, while "on sale" also means that an item is available for purchase but often implies that it has a reduced price. Therefore, if you see an advertisement that says "this item is for sale," it simply means that the item is available for purchase at its regular price. On the other hand, if you see an advertisement that says "this item is on sale," it means that the item is available for purchase at a discounted price.Correct UsageIn British English, both "for sale" and "on sale" mean the same thing – that the object is available to be sold. However, in American English, there is a subtle difference between the two phrases. "For sale" means that the owner is willing to sell the item, while "on sale" means that the item is being sold at a discounted price. Consequently, if you are an American English speaker, it is important to use the correct phrase to avoid confusion.Grammatical Context and UsageWhen it comes to the correct usage of "for sale" and "on sale," it is important to understand the grammatical context in which each phrase is used. "For sale" is a phrase that is used to indicate that something is available for purchase. It is a noun phrase that can be used as a standalone phrase or as part of a sentence. Here are a few examples of how "for sale" can be used in a sentence:The car is for sale.The house has been on the market for six months, but it is still for sale.I saw a sign that said the furniture was for sale."On sale," on the other hand, is a phrase that is used to indicate that something is being sold at a discounted price. It is a prepositional phrase that is often used with the verb "to be." Here are a few examples of how "on sale" can be used in a sentence:The shoes are on sale for 20% off.The store is having a sale, and everything is on sale.I bought this dress because it was on sale.Take note that "on sale" can also be used to describe something that is available for purchase, but it is not the primary meaning of the phrase. When used in this context, "on sale" simply means that something is available for purchase in terms of spelling and grammar, "for sale" and "on sale" are both correct and can be used interchangeably depending on the context. Nonetheless, it is crucial to use the correct phrase in order to convey the intended meaning.Understanding the difference between "for sale" and "on sale" is important in order to use them correctly in written and spoken language. So, the next time you're writing an ad or describing a product, make sure you're using the right term for the situation. Hello English learners! Today, we're going to differentiate between two commonly confused phrases: "On Sale" and "For Sale". Though they sound similar, they carry different meanings. Let's understand them better. On Sale When something is "On Sale" (IPA: /ɒn seɪl/), it means that the item's price has been reduced for a limited period. We often see this phrase during discount events or promotions. Examples: The shoes are "On Sale" at 50% off! (The shoes are discounted by 50%) I bought this shirt while it was "On Sale". (I bought this shirt when it was discounted) The store puts their winter clothing "On Sale" during spring. (The store discounts their winter clothes in spring) "Black Friday" is known for having many items "On Sale". (Black Friday is known for many discounted items) We found a great TV that was "On Sale". (We found a great TV that was discounted) I'm waiting for the video game to go "On Sale". (I'm waiting for the video game to be discounted) Many online shops have "On Sale" sections. (Many online shops have discounted items sections) The new book was "On Sale" for the first week after its release. (The new book was discounted during the first week after its release) The furniture store has sofas "On Sale". (The furniture store has discounted sofas) Check out the "On Sale" items for the best deals. (Check the discounted items for the best deals) For Sale When an item is "For Sale" (IPA: /fɔː seɪl/), it simply means that it is available to be purchased. This doesn't necessarily indicate a reduced price. Examples: The house next door is "For Sale". (The house next door is available to purchase) She put her old bicycle "For Sale" online. (She listed her old bicycle online for purchase) There's a car "For Sale" on that street. (There's a car available to buy on that street) He found a rare collectible "For Sale" at the flea market. (He found a rare collectible available for purchase at the flea market) There are many beautiful paintings "For Sale" in the gallery. (There are many beautiful paintings available to purchase in the gallery) The bakery has fresh bread "For Sale" every morning. (The bakery sells fresh bread every morning) She saw a lovely dress "For Sale" in the shop window. (She saw a lovely dress available to purchase in the shop window) The bookstore has a new novel "For Sale". (The bookstore has a new novel available for purchase) The farmers market has fresh produce "For Sale". (The farmers market sells fresh produce) There are concert tickets "For Sale" at the box office. (There are concert tickets available for purchase at the box office) Conclusion So there you have it! While "On Sale" items are discounted, items "For Sale" are simply available to be bought, with no indication of a price reduction. Remember this distinction next time you go shopping! While the word "sale" sits at the heart of each phrase, the terms "sale," "for sale," and "on sale" have important distinctions that are essential for clear communication, especially in the world of shopping and commerce. Let's break them down: Meaning: "Sale" broadly refers to the act of exchanging goods or services for money. It can also indicate an event or period where items are offered at discounted prices. Examples: "The department store is having a huge summer sale." "My job involves making sales to potential customers." Meaning: "For sale" indicates that an item is available for purchase. Examples: "The house next door has a 'for sale' sign in the yard." "I found some interesting antiques for sale at the flea market." Meaning: "On sale" implies that an item's price has been temporarily reduced. Examples: "My favorite pair of shoes is finally on sale!" "The grocery store has a lot of produce on sale this week." Classified Ads: In classified ads or online marketplaces, you'd likely see headings like "Items for Sale" or listings specifying "Bicycle for Sale." Retail Stores: Stores use signs reading "Sale" to advertise general discounts. Individual items would be marked with "On Sale" tags. Real Estate: A "For Sale" sign signifies the owner's intent to sell a property. "Sale" is the broadest term, encompassing the concept of selling and special price events. "For sale" clearly indicates an item's availability for purchase. "On sale" specifically means a price reduction. Mastering these distinctions will make you a more precise communicator and savvy shopper! Author English Plus Podcast is dedicated to bring you the most interesting, engaging and informative daily dose of English and knowledge. So, if you want to take your English and knowledge to the next level, look no further. Our dedicated content creation team has got you covered! Hello, everyone! Could you, please, explain to me if there is a difference between on sale and in the sale. I used to think that in the sale meant at a reduced price and on sale meant be available for buying. However I've just come across "on sale" meaning at a reduced price. I'm confused now. Thank you in advance! There's a difference here between AmE and BrE. "On sale" in BrE simply means "purchasable"; in AmE it means "purchasable at a reduced price". In American English 'for sale' means 'purchasable'. 'On sale' means 'for sale at a reduced price'. *'in the sale' is not used in American English. In British English: These goods are on sale = for sale = these goods are available for purchase. These goods are in the sale = these goods are included in the cut-price offer. (A sale is a period or special promotion when numbers of goods are offered at a reduced price. E.g. the January sales... A closing-down sale...) Thank you so much! Now I am clear about it! In American English 'for sale' means 'purchasable'. 'On sale' means 'for sale at a reduced price'. *'in the sale' is not used in American English. I agree right up to the last point. "In the sale" doesn't come up often in AmE, but it's perfectly possible with the meaning "included in the group of items that are for sale at a reduced price," just as Keith mentions in post #4. It's also used to refer to special sales, such as auctions. I agree that "in the sale" can be used in American English in certain situations. If I am attending an auction and I see a table that is being used by the staff of the auction house, I might say, "Is this table in the sale?" If the answer is, "No, sir, this is our table. It is not in the sale", then it is not an item that I will be able to bid on, even though I like the table and would like to be able to buy it. Here "in the sale" is an ordinary prepositional phrase not much different from "in our database" or "in the garage". It can be used when appropriate, but as JustKate says, it doesn't come up often in American English. On the other hand 'for sale' and 'on sale' are ubiquitous in American English with meanings not closely related to the specific prepositions in them. So this is how it works in BE, right? This book is on sale at bookshops now. (We are able to buy it.) This book is in the sale at bookshops now. (The price has been reduced.) And are these the AE equivalents? This book is for sale at bookstores now. (We are able to buy it.) This book is on sale at bookstores now. (The price has been reduced.) Yes, although I would prefer "for" in that sentence - but I am just one of several million BE speakers. And are these the AE equivalents? This book is for sale at bookstores now. (We are able to buy it.) This book is on sale at bookstores now. (The price has been reduced.) Yes, that's how I'd expect Americans typically to use 'for sale' and 'on sale.' So this is how it works in BE, right? This book is on sale at bookshops now. (We are able to buy it.) This book is in the sale at bookshops now. (The price has been reduced.) And are these the AE equivalents? This book is for sale at bookstores now. (We are able to buy it.) This book is on sale at bookstores now. (The price has been reduced.) I'd say "on sale" only in these contexts. The price of the books has been reduced. I think it's actually more complicated in AE. Although that is a very good first pass at making a rule -- for sale = available, on sale = reduced price -- it's not the end of the story. "For sale" always means available, but "on sale" doesn't always mean reduced price. It can also mean available. It's common with books, for instance. When a new book is published it's often advertised with the tag line "On sale everywhere" or, fancier, something like "On sale wherever fine books are sold". It's brand new, just published, and it's not at a reduced price. It's just telling you the book is now available. This is the text below the picture. "I'm happy to announce that as of July 2, 2019, WARHEAD is on sale everywhere your books are sold!" The person writing this has no control over when every bookstore has a (reduced price) sale. They just mean the book is in general distribution. Last edited: Oct 26, 2021 Here's an example for toys. In case you were interested but unaware, Cool Toy Review points out that Dark Knight Rises toys are now on sale at stores everywhere.If you see the word "everywhere" you can pretty much assume it's a reference to availability. Home/Commonly confused words/for sale vs. on sale for sale (available to buy, especially from the owner) Several houses in this street are for sale. Is this car for sale? on sale UK (available to buy, especially in a shop) Tickets are on sale at the box office. Their new album goes on sale next week. US (available to buy at a reduced price) Those \$60 shoes are now on sale for \$30. envocabulary.com Q: I am wondering why everything being sold is "for sale," but only promoted items with special pricing are "on sale." Can you help? A: We've often wondered about this ourselves. As all shoppers know, everything that's "on sale" is "for sale." But the reverse isn't necessarily true. How did this come about? The explanation requires a detour into etymological history. The noun "sale" first appeared in late Old English writing around 1050, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. It has ancient Germanic roots, and probably came into English by way of Old Norse. It's always meant more or less the same thing—the disposal of a commodity for a price. Here's the OED definition: "The action or an act of selling or making over to another for a price; the exchange of a commodity for money or other valuable consideration." Oxford's citations include this one from a will written in 1411: "Þ forseyd sale of my londes and tenementes." ("Th' foresaid sale of my lands and holdings.") The phrase "for sale," which dates back to Elizabethan times, has always meant "intended to be sold" or "with a view to selling," according to citations in the OED. The earliest example given in Oxford is from Shakespeare's Cymbeline (circa 1611): "The other is not a thing for sale." This later example is from Nathaniel Hawthorne's Our Old Home: A Series of English Sketches (1863): "We went into a bookseller's shop to inquire if he had any description of Boston for sale." Another phrase that's just as old, "on (or upon) sale," has meant the same thing as "for sale." We'll quote a pair of the OED's modern English examples: "A book which has been upon sale ever since it was published, twelve years ago" (from Robert Southey's The Life and Works of William Cowper, 1835). "The Times is on Sale for 3d. per Copy at all railway bookstalls in England and Wales" (from a 1901 issue of the Times, London). So far so good. For hundreds of years, the noun "sale" and the phrases "on sale" and "for sale" were pretty straightforward. But in the hubbub of the mid-19th century marketplace, as department stores began to flourish, "sale" took on another meaning—the selling of something at a discount. Here's the OED definition: "A special disposal of shop goods at rates lower than those usually charged in order to get rid of them rapidly, e.g. at the end of a 'season.'" The dictionary's earliest example is from an advertisement that ran in an 1866 issue of Chambers's Journal: "Enormous and incredible sale ... for ten days only!!!" (As you can see, hyperbole and multiple exclamation marks are nothing new in advertising.) Lady Laura Troubridge used "sale" this way in an 1875 entry in her journal, published in Life Amongst the Troubridges (1966): "We ... found a vague little shop where a sale was going on and everything was too ridiculously cheap. We bought some little silk scarves for a penny three farthings each." Standard dictionaries, as well as the OED, recognize that in modern English, a "sale" is a two-edged proposition. It means a disposal of goods, either at or below the usual price. So things were becoming confused even before the phrase "on sale" took on a new sense: available for purchase at a discount. The OED has no entries for this newer meaning of "on sale," but standard dictionaries have taken notice of it. Both Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (11th ed.) and The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (5th ed.) say "for sale" has only one meaning (available for purchase), but "on sale" has two (available for purchase or available at a discount). Shoppers, of course, are good at translating the language of ads, so they're aware of the difference. And as we all know, even a discounted "sale price" isn't always a bargain. ("Bargain," by the way, has been around since Middle English and can be traced to the Old French verb bargaigner, "to haggle.") We can't sign off without mentioning that the original meaning of "sell" was to give—a meaning that, needless to say, is now defunct! It was recorded that way in Beowulf, which probably dates to the mid-700s. In the late 10th century, "sell" acquired another meaning—to give up or hand over someone to an enemy. This usage is still with us, generally in the verb phrase "sell out," which developed in the 19th century. The most common meaning of "sell," to hand over something for a price, was first recorded around the year 1000. Help support the Grammarphobia Blog with your donation. And check out our books about the English language.