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Hello, I have one question/problem: Lyric of song King of the Road:Ah but, two hours of pushin' broom (I understand, it = sweeping)buys an eight by twelve four-bit room ("Four bit" = \$0.5? What does buys he? What does this words together mean?)Thank you! The first line of the song is "Trailer for sale or rent, rooms to let", fifty cents.No phone, no pool, no pets, I ain't got no cigarettesAh, but, two hours of pushin' broom"The cost to rent a room is \$0.50 and it's a small room (8 feet by 12 feet) *let = to allow to be leased:no objectJan apartment to let. Is that 50 cents a day, do you think? Last edited: Apr 18, 2017 Given how old the song is I suspect so I've always been intrigued by the "four-bit room" part. How can "four-bit" mean "fifty cents"? Two bits is long-standing American slang for 25 cents.For example, it appears in the well known phrase "Shave and a haircut...two bits", meaning that's the cost of a shave and a haircut (in the old, old days). Apparently there's some great uncertainty about where that phrase actually originated but it's spoken like it came from a song or something - with a sing-songy rhythm. Last edited: Apr 19, 2017 Ah - so is there such a thing as "one bit"? bit - WordReference.com Dictionary of English 3 an amount equivalent to 12 U.S. cents (used only in even multiples)two bits; six bits. Online Etymology Dictionary Meaning "small piece, fragment" is from c. 1600. Sense of "short space of time" is 1650s. Theatrical bit part is from 1909. Money sense in two bits, etc. is originally from Southern U.S. and West Indies, in reference to silver wedges cut or stamped from Spanish dollars (later Mexican reales); transferred to "eighth of a dollar." Spanish dollar - Wikipedia The real de a ocho, also known as the Spanish dollar, the eight-real coin, or the piece of eight (Spanish peso de ocho), is a silver coin, of approximately 38 mm diameter, worth eight reales, that was minted in the Spanish Empire after 1598. Its purpose was to correspond to the German thaler. We don't use "one bit" any more because it doesn't fit with our current coinage. The WR dictionary extract seems to indicate that you only use "two-bit", "four-bit" etc. I take it that's how you see it too, Myridon? The dictionary extract seems to indicate that you only use "two-bit", "four-bit" etc. I take it that's how you see it too, Myridon? Right. We haven't had any half-cent coins since 1857 so there's no way to make 12.5 cents with coins worth one cent, five cents, and ten cents. A quarter (1/4 of a dollar) is two bits, but there's no way to have one, three, five, or other odd number of bits so we don't talk about those amounts. Thank you. I'm sure I'll understand this when my mind stops bogging... As noted above, the concept of 8 "bits" in a dollar derives from the Spanish silver dollar coin that was worth 8 reales. These coins were the "pieces of eight" one finds in pirate stories. As the most common coin in use in the New World, the Spanish dollar was the model for the US dollar - and thus the idea of the dollar having 8 component parts. When the New York Stock exchange began at the end of the 18th Century, stock prices were calculated in eighths of a dollar (later modified to sixteenths), and this continued to be the way stock prices were reported on the NYSE until 2001. Keep in mind it's not common current slang. It's mostly seen in old songs and old movies. There's not much left you can buy for two bits (certainly not a shave and a haircut) and, even for those things that you can, no one today will tell you that you owe them two bits. So your mind can unboogie a bit. Old cheerleading call, still (I think) current when I was in high school: "Two bits, four bits, six bits, a dollar--All for [team name], stand up and holler!" Yes, I remember that one. I have no idea if any child in school today would know it. Thank you, it is very interesting to me! Completely different reality than here!I'll ask my English teacher, if she can count in bits... JulianStuart: And these things (Spanish silver dollar / 8 bits >>> a term "byte/8 bits") are really derived? Hello, I have one question/problem: Lyric of song King of the Road:Ah but, two hours of pushin' broom (I understand, it = sweeping)buys an eight by twelve four-bit room ("Four bit" = \$0.5? What does buys he? What does this words together mean?)Thank you! Back in Abe Lincoln's day two bits was 25 cents, SO, that means that One Bit equalled 12.5 cents. In the Song by Roger Miller "8 hours of pushin' broom buys a 8 (foot) by 12 (foot) 4 bit room", (12.5/bit x 4= 50 cents.) That's a room barely big enough to put a single mattress or perhaps an army cot in, but if you're poor with no money whatsoever then 8 hours of sweeping dirt into a dustpan and emptying it buys a dry place inside a building overnight instead of sleeping outside in the elements of cold, rainy, dirty, unsafe, and pest infested outside.A happy and positive song for enduring a lonely, miserable, and hellish way to exist! Also still bogging somewhat, but it's interesting to learn that even the US money system isn't entirely decimal..... Well, wasn't entirely decimal. Bits are not used in calculating the price of anything these days. 'Two-bit' still means 'cheap' in the sense of 'poor quality,' but I doubt that many people use it. I think, but I haven't done any actual research, that the concept of two bits might possibly go all the way back to the Spanish pieces of eight, which were Spanish coins cut into eight pieces by dividing them in half and in half and in half. 25 cents is a quarter of a dollar and two pieces of eight are a quarter of the 8 pieces in the full coin. Early American money was based on Spanish money, specifically the Spanish dollar.Spanish dollar - WikipediaWe've been binary (powers of two) as long as we've been decimal. If two hours if pushin' a broom buys an 8' by 12' four-bit room, he's getting the equivalent of 25 an hour 'in kind' (not in money but in a place to sleep).< Topic drift removed. Cagney, moderator > Last edited by a moderator: Feb 8, 2024 Very little money was minted (or printed) in the North American English colonies, but shillings were minted in Massachusetts in the mid-seventeenth century, and Spanish reales (as international currency) and British coins circulated in the colonies also. The colonies had a surprising (to us) cashless economy. Hi to all, I am wondering if you could help me with the following: Which of the two is correct? it's a quarter to/past two OR it's quarter to/past two Does it have to do anything with British or American English? Some school books present it in one way and some others in another way. Thank you in advance. Veeka Speaking for my version of BE, the "a" is required. I am wondering if you could help me with the following: Which of the two is correct?it's a quarter to/past two OR it's quarter to/past twoDoes it have to do anything with British or American English? Some school books present it in one way and some others in another way. In US English, we normally include the "a"-but not necessarily always, and omitting the "a" would not be considered incorrect.Probably the best-known instance of its omission is the song "One For My Baby," by Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen (the most famous recording was by Frank Sinatra). It's a "story song," and the singer, whose girlfriend has just left him, is sitting in a bar at 2:45 a.m. In the opening lines, he addresses the bartender: "It's quarter to three. There's no one in the place except you and me. So set 'em up, Joe . . ." Last edited: Nov 16, 2010 BE listeners, modelled on me, hear FS smooth an "a" in that line.It'sa quarter to three...It may not be there, of course If you ask me what time it is I say 'Quarter past one'. If you forced me to use four or five words when three would do, I'd say 'It's quarter past one.' Rover Hi everybody,We can tell the time this way:It's one fifteen.It's one twenty.But:It's one oh five.When to add "oh"?I am wondering whether it's one oh ten or one ten :-

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