

# Going Commando

The phrase “going commando” is, hooray, American slang. While “going” and “commando” are not, I am looking at the phrase which means “I’m not wearing any underwear and I am damn proud of it.” I picked “going commando” and not “freeballing” or “freebuffing” because “going commando” tends to have a more playfully sexual connotation rather than a dirty one.

First, I would like to point out, the term was not created nor made popular in any way by some silly episode of “Friends” which you might have watched.

Next, the easily accepted etymology of the phrases indicates military men, “commandos”, moved about without underwear because it was hot and they didn’t want to be restricted. The word popped up during the Vietnam war, it would make sense. It’s been stated, going without underwear cuts down on laundry. I will have to do research on that later.

So, since this phrase is American slang and actually fairly modern, it’s written origins can be easily traced. It was Jim Spencer of the “Chicago Tribune” who wrote an article called “50 Years Marking the Golden Anniversary of a Brief Success.” (“Brief” meaning “undies” AND “short”. Clever!). This article was published on January 22, 1985 and stated: *“Furthermore, colored briefs are 'sleazy' and going without underwear ('going commando', as they say on campus) is simply gross.”*

I did try to find the article because I was interested in the context. I was able to get a document abstract from the Chicago Tribune, but, not the full article. (You could if you PAID, I’m sure) It seems, however, Mr. Spencer was writing about Jockey International (the underwear company) and how the term “jockeys” were becoming the term for anyone’s undies.

Not quite the tone of “going commando” that I know and love. Of course, if you think about it, a woman “going commando” has got to be pretty hot to men. Anything of a flirtation and sexual nature will gain popularity. In fact, the very definition of “going commando” indicates being out in the open and ready for action. And we all love a little action. College kids could have easily turned this term positive after a game of beer pong.

I should add, if you search for “going commando” there are plenty of references to Mr. Spencer’s pen-work. The real credit should go to Daniel Egber of “Slate” (an online news/culture mag) who attributed the term to the 1970’s college campuses - that’s 10 years in the vernacular before hitting the press and becoming officially recorded.

Even the British say it.

The British? Why the Hell don’t the British use the term to “cry uncle” then? Could the British be sneakily responsible for such a term?

In a way.

The word “commando” is important yet minor to mention. “Commando” is actually African, made popular by everyone's fav, Winston Churchill. But it means an unit. A regiment. It doesn't actually mean ONE person. It means a group. Some radio/news personal are responsible for carrying out the the definition to mean one person, one commando. (Commandoi?). I am sure if “commando” had stayed meaning “a regiment” the term “going commando” wouldn't really exist. It would be “going regimental” or something.

Going regimental? There is a phrase that is very U.K that means “without underwear” and it is “regimental.”

The only regiment in the world with a history of not wearing underwear during a time when “commando” was being used was the Scottish Regiments of the U.K army.

It is the Scottish Regiment of the U.K army wear kilts. And we all know what a Scotsman has under his kilt.

I did continue to research the kilt to find out WHY nothing is worn under the kilt that would inspire American slang. I found the kilt has been around since about the 16th century. The kilt was really created as a very basic garment which did not need to be tailored or replaced as much as breeches did. It was possibly an evolution of knee length tunics and cloth used as armor and the need to wear both and one got wrapped around the body. I am not sure, there seems to be some controversy here and nothing of the kilt's creation got me any information about why it is traditional not to wear anything under them. Other than pre-16th century, there were no underwear.

The kilt did allow more free movement. Men in both the high and lowlands could move freely and pull up the kilt to wade through water or mud. When pleated, there was substantial fabric to use as a bed or to create pockets to carry things or just make a hood.

A description from 1746 states:

*"The garb is certainly very loose, and fits men inured to it to go through great fatigues, to make very quick marches, to bear out against the inclemency of the weather, to wade through rivers, and shelter in huts, woods, and rocks upon occasion; which men dressed in the low country garb could not possibly endure."*

I also learn it was customary to take off the kilt before going into battle.

Hmm. Etymology is full of surprises!

In Chile if you want to say, playfully, you are wearing no underwear, you say: "andar a lo gringo" ("go about as the Americans").