When pigs fly

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For the sketch comedy group, see The Flying Pigs.
For the Polish film known in English as Flying Pigs, see Flying Pigs.
For other uses, see When Pigs Fly (disambiguation).

The phrase "**when pigs fly**" (alternatively, "**pigs might fly**") is an adynaton—a figure of speech so hyperbolic that it describes an impossibility. The implication of such a phrase is that the circumstances in question (the adynaton, and the circumstances to which the adynaton is being applied) will never occur. The phrase has been used in various forms since the 1600s as a sarcastic remark.[1]

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Meaning [edit]



John Moore-Brabazon, 1st Baron Brabazon of Tara took a small pig with him on board an aeroplane in 1909

"When pigs fly" is an adynaton, a way of saying that something will never happen. The phrase is often used for humorous effect, to scoff at over-ambition. There are numerous variations on the theme; when an individual with a reputation for failure finally succeeds, onlookers may sarcastically claim to see a flying pig. ("Hey look! A flying pig!")[2] Other variations on the phrase include "And pigs will fly", this one in retort to an outlandish statement.

An example occurs in the film *The Eagle Has Landed*: an Irish secret agent working for the Nazis replies to a German general speaking of Germany's shortly winning World War II, "Pigs may fly, General, but I doubt it!" Later, when the Irishman sees German soldiers parachuting before an attack, he says to himself, "Mother of God! Flying pigs!"

An identical phrase, used to express impossibilities, exists in Romanian, *Când o zbura porcul*, literally meaning "When the pig shall fly"; an equivalent also implying an animal is *La Paștele cailor*, literally: "on horses' Easter". Similar phrases in English include "when hell freezes over", the Latin expression "to the Greek calends", and "and monkeys might fly out of my butt", popularized in Wayne's World skits and movies. They are examples of adynata.[3] In Finnish, the expression "*kun lehmät lentävät*" (when cows fly) is used because of its alliteration. In French, the most common expression is "*quand les poules auront des dents*" (when hens will have teeth). In medieval Hebrew manuscripts, the expression "until the donkey ascends the ladder" is attested.[4]

The idiom is apparently derived from a centuries-old Scottish proverb, though some other references to pigs flying or pigs with wings are more famous. At least one appears in the works of Lewis Carroll:

> "Thinking again?" the Duchess asked, with another dig of her sharp little chin.
> "I've a right to think," said Alice sharply, for she was beginning to feel a little worried.
> "Just about as much right," said the Duchess, "as pigs have to fly ..." — Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Chapter 9.[5]

American literature author John Steinbeck was told by his professor that he would be an author when pigs flew. When he eventually became a novelist, he started to print every book he wrote with the insignia "Ad astra per alas porci" (to the stars on the wings of a pig).[6] He sometimes added an image of a flying pig, called "Pigasus".

Incidentally, a pig finally flew on 4th November 1909, when John Moore-Brabazon, 1st Baron Brabazon of Tara took a small pig with him on board an aeroplane.[7][8]

In popular culture [edit]


Fliegende Schweine by Michael Maschka

- In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872), the poem "The Walrus and the Carpenter" poses the question of "whether pigs have wings".
- Pigasus was a flying pig character in the *Oz* books written by Ruth Plumly Thompson in the 1930s.[9]
- Because of the historical importance of the pig industry to the city, prominent in the local iconography of Cincinnati[10] (nicknamed 'Porkopolis') are such events as the Big Pig Gig and the Flying Pig Marathon. Public art around town features flying pigs.
- In Grand Prairie, Texas, the semi-pro baseball team is the Grand Prairie AirHogs. In advertising, they have used the slogan "Where Hogs fly".
- In the 1968 movie *The Lion in Winter*, King Henry II tells his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine "When pigs have wings!". She replies "There'll be pork in the trees come morning!"
- Pink Floyd had a flying pig on the cover of their 1977 album *Animals*. This clearly ties in with the album's two-part song "Pigs on the Wing". Since then the group has used a flying pig as a prop for concerts (see Pink Floyd pigs). The pig on the *Animals* cover has in turn been referenced in other works, including the 1984 video game *Jet Set Willy* and the 2006 film *Children of Men*.
- In *Alice*, a popular TV series based on the 1974 movie *Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More*. Alice (Linda Lavin) worked at Mel's Diner along with a spunky waitress named Flo (Polly Holliday). Flo spoke with a southern twang, and one of her favorite sayings was, "When Pigs Fly!"
- In *The Simpsons* episode, "Lisa the Vegetarian", Lisa pushes Homer's prize pig down a hill into a river, where it ends up getting shot through the air by a dam's spillway suction. In his office Mr. Burns says to Smithers he would like to do something charitable with his wealth, donating a million dollars to the orphanage. Smithers becomes confused at this, and Burns answers "when pigs fly". The pig then passes his window in flight, much to their surprise, at which point he admits he would still like to keep his money.
- In the *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World: The Game* subspace highway screens, as well as the unrelated mobile game *Jetpack Joyride*, players may be rewarded with money by destroying flying piggy banks.
- The *Angry Birds* mobile game spin-off *Bad Piggies* directly references this trope as the title of the third set of levels, where players must build flying machines that green pig(s) will pilot to accomplish their missions. In the *Angry Birds Movie*, several of such pigs are air force pilots who can fly makeshift airplanes to assault the titular birds as they advance deeper into Pig City in a final, climatic battle.
- In *Hexen*, the player can be turned into a pig and use wings of wrath, this results in a flying pig.
- Arjen Anthony Lucassen's second solo album, *Lost in the New Real* features a track titled "Where pigs fly".
- In the UK BBC One series called *ShakespeaRe-Told* adaptation of *Macbeth*, the character Joe Macbeth's monologue "Is that a [police] helicopter? Is it landing on this building? Pigs will fly! Pigs will fly!" It is the film's translation of "The Birnam Wood" reference to the warning given to Macbeth in the Shakespeare play of the same name, in which he is warned that "Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until / Great Birnam wood to high dunsinane hill / Shall come against him."
- After the New Orleans Saints, long known for their lack of success, won the 2009 NFC Championship Game by making a field goal in sudden death overtime, longtime Saints radio announcer Jim Henderson exclaimed, "Pigs have flown! Hell has frozen over! The Saints are on their way to the Super Bowl!"[11]
- Flying pigs were seen in the film *Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang* and were a large part of the promotion related to it, including its major promotional posters. The original *Nanny McPhee* film had featured the phrase "snow in August" as a similar reference to something that was supposed to be impossible.
- The cover of Stephen Colbert's adult-targeted picture book *I Am a Pole (And So Can You!)* features an emblem stating that it is a "Caldecott Eligible Book" and a picture of Colbert riding a flying pig, a tongue-in-cheek reference to the book's actual likelihood of being nominated for this award.
- In the third season of the Canadian sketch comedy series *The Kids in the Hall*, a flying pig (portrayed by Bruce McCulloch) appeared in several sketches to entertain people who had been waiting in long lines.[12]
- In Eminem's 2013 song "Legacy", a variant phrase of this is said: "The day you beat me, pigs will fly out my ass into a flying saucer full of Italian sausage!"
- In *The 7D* episode "When Pigs Fly", Hildy and Grim Gloom use a spell to give the pigs owned by the farmer Zoinky McZoinks wings and control them as part of their plan to eat all the food in Jollywood in order to cause its citizens to head to Hildegard Estates to become their minions. The 7D managed to thwart the plan by coating the Glooms' house in chocolate. By the end of the episode, the flying pigs were returned to Zoinky McZoinks who managed to make some money off the flying pigs.
- In *Star vs. the Forces of Evil* episode "Brittney's Party", Brittney Wong told Star that she will be invited to her birthday party "when pigs fly". Star took it literally and used her wand to create an actual flying pig in order to get invited.
- On the wall of a building along Biscayne Blvd. near 81st St. in Miami, Florida.[*citation needed*]
- In a self-effacing reference to their less-than-stellar record, the log canoe Edmee S. has adopted a flying pig as their mascot.[*citation needed*]
- In the game Minecraft, old versions had the achievement "When Pigs Fly" for making a pig fall more than 7 meters.
- "When Pigs Fly" is the second track on the 1997 album *Till the Cows Come Home* of German metal band Farmer Boys.
- In the animated series *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, the symbol of the Beifong family is a winged boar.
- In Evil Genius 2: World Domination the High on the Hog Side Story plays around the possibility of stealing a flying pig to proof Agent X wrong, but it turns out it was a ride.



When pigs FRY, an anti-proverb

Related phrases [edit]

- In rural areas of Córdoba Province, Argentina there's the saying "if I tell you that pigs fly, is because I saw one landing" (si te digo que los chanchos vuelan, es porque he visto a uno aterrizar). It is used in a situation when something might seem irrational, but experience proved otherwise.

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External links [edit]

- Humorous Internet memorandum RFC 1925 insists that "with sufficient thrust, pigs fly just fine".

Look up *when pigs fly* in Wiktionary, the free dictionary.

v · t · e	**Pigs** [hide]
	Kingdom Animalia · Phylum Chordata · Class Mammalia · Order Artiodactyla · Suborder Suina · Family Suidae · Subfamily Suinae · Genus *Sus*
Domestic	Breeding: Shows Farming: Intensive farming · Sty · Pannage · Toilet · Hog oiler · Gestation crate · Cross-fostering · Swineherd As food: Bacon · Ham · Lard · Pork · Chitterlings · Scalder · Slaughter · Suckling · Blood · Religious restrictions · Scottish pork taboo Cuts: Back bacon · Boston butt · Fatback · Ham hock · Pig's trotters · Pork belly · Pork chop · Pork jowl · Loin · Tenderloin · Ribs · Spare ribs · Pork rind · Pork steak · Ear · Tail Other uses: Bladder · Racing · War · Wrestling · Truffling
Wild and feral	Wild boar (Heraldry · Hunting) · In the Philippines · Razorback · Boar–pig hybrid
In culture	Freddy the Pig · Flitch of bacon custom · Floyd of Rosedale · Miss Piggy ("Pigs in Space") · Porky Pig · Piglet · "The Three Little Pigs" · *Animal Farm* (Old Major · Napoleon · Snowball · Squealer) · *Babe* · *Babe: Pig in the City* · *Bad Piggies* · *My Brother the Pig* · *Charlotte's Web* · Empress of Blandings · *The Sheep-Pig* · *Peppa Pig* · *Super Pig* · *Fair, then Partly Piggy* · *Jakers! The Adventures of Piggley Winks* · Olivia (character) (TV series) · Pink Floyd pigs · *Pinky and Perky* · *Preston Pig* · *Rasher* · *Porco Rosso* · Spider-Ham · Spider pig · *The Tale of Little Pig Robinson* · *The Tale of Pigling Bland* · "This Little Piggy" · *Toot & Puddle* · *Huxley Pig* · *Wibbly Pig* · Zhu Bajie · Hamilton Hocks
Other	List of individual pigs · List of fictional pigs · Piganino · Pigasus (politics) · "**When pigs fly**"
	Category: Pigs

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