

WEDNESDAY 7TH OCTOBER

Crashgate, Partygate, Wagatha-gate. Have you ever wondered why scandals have the ending in ‘-gate’? It all began in June 1972 when 5 men were caught breaking into the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate building complex in Washington DC.

The *Watergate* investigation eventually uncovered links to President Richard Nixon’s re-election campaign and his attempt to cover it up. After two years of investigations and court battles, Nixon resigned in August 1974.

During those two years the name *Watergate* was everywhere in the media. By the end 97% of Americans were familiar with the scandal. Newspapers and television repeated the word Watergate so often that people began playing with it, attaching ‘-gate’ to the names of unrelated controversies. Journalist William Safire, a former speechwriter for Nixon was particularly keen on using the **suffix** for other scandals.

Perhaps because of Watergate’s longevity, perhaps due to its saturation in public consciousness, the joke stuck and more than 50 years later we still attach ‘-gate’ to words to create the shorthand name for scandals, particularly in politics. It left a permanent mark on the English language and is even now in the dictionary.



- Why do you think ‘-gate’ survived when most newspaper nicknames disappear?

WEDNESDAY 7TH OCTOBER

Crashgate, Partygate, Wagatha-gate. Have you ever wondered why scandals have the ending in ‘-gate’? It all began in 1972 when 5 men were caught breaking into the Democratic Party HQ in the Watergate building complex in Washington DC.

The investigation took 2 years and led to President Nixon resigning in 1974. During that time the name *Watergate* was everywhere, repeated so often 97% of Americans were familiar it. People began playing with it, attaching ‘-gate’ to unrelated controversies. The joke stuck and 50 years later we use the ‘-gate’ **suffix** to create a shorthand name for scandals. It’s even in the dictionary.

- Why do you think ‘-gate’ survived when most nicknames disappear?

