



■ Dick Lumsden has discovered the location mapper app What3Words, which has divided the world into three-metre squares.

Photo: WIKIPEDIA

# Three words mean you will never get lost again

**B**ack in the day, when you arranged to meet someone, you agreed the place and the time and that was it.

You took it on trust that they would know how to get there, and that they would leave enough time to get to you before you froze to death or lost the will to live.

Then someone invented mobile phones. So now they could ring you and tell you they were going to be late, or had forgotten where you were meeting and it would all be OK.

Next came satellite navigation and they could find you just by punching in a post code.

I'm a great user of sat nav, but, and I'm sure it has happened to you, when the smug voice says "you have now reached your destination" all it has really done is delivered you to approximately the right place.

The average UK post code covers about 15 addresses. In cities like London it could be half a street, in rural areas like Suffolk it could mean several streets. So if you don't know exactly where you are going, it can be incredibly frustrating.

But fear not, for now there is a system which can guide you to within three metres of any spot on the planet – and it isn't exclusive to NASA, nor does it require memorising long strings of numbers for latitude and longitude and carrying Ordnance Survey maps and a compass.

What3Words is the brilliantly eccentric but useful invention of two young Brits who thought it would be easier to remember words rather than numbers.

I'm writing this article from a spot now known as jaws.beside.corn, otherwise known as my office in Soho. However, I would much rather be at warthog.twinkled.chef (the

**DICK LUMSDEN** discovers a revolutionary new way of finding out where you are, and where you want to be.

first tee at Brett Vale Golf Club) or at solo.punch.cage (my seat in the Sir Bobby Robson Stand at Portman Road).

It may sound weird to you the first time you hear it...but mark my words (no pun intended), What3Words is set to become as well-known as Amazon or Google.

The company has taken a map of the world and divided it up into three metre squares – 57 trillion of them! Then using sophisticated computer programming, each individual square has been randomly allocated three words as an identification tag.

No two squares have the same words in the same order, so as long as you know the words for the place you are trying to find, you can navigate straight there.

You can have hours of fun on their website at [www.what3words.com](http://www.what3words.com) looking up random spots and checking out the keywords for your favourite pub, or restaurant. Or discovering random phrases for your friends and family's houses. But where it really comes into its own is when you download the app and start using it free!

I downloaded it in seconds to my Doro smartphone (other smartphones are available) and wherever you are, you can just make a note of the three words showing on screen, and give them to anyone trying to find you (as long as they have the app, too, of course)..

No longer do you have to find a landmark to stand by, like the clock in Waterloo Station (gentle.windy.pirate) you just arrange to meet at

three given words and wait inside your invisible three metre square.

But before you go rushing off to download the app and key in all sorts of smutty words and phrases, they are way ahead of you there. The computer has used 40,000 words, and great care is taken to exclude swear words, or words in combinations that might be offensive.

Of course, a global geomapping system which uses exclusively English words would be pretty much useless in Russia, or Spain or any other country where English is not spoken, so now the company is working on foreign language versions using the same technology. For instance, since I have not moved since starting to write this, any Italians using the system can find me at [prezzo.vero.grafi](http://prezzo.vero.grafi)

What3Words is still a very young company, but its reputation is spreading fast. The United Nations is using it to help with humanitarian efforts in areas where supplies need to be delivered and addresses are non-existent. And the British Museum has tagged more than one million items with the three word location of where they were found.

Right, that's enough for this week, I'm heading off for some light refreshment at [gratuity.thighs](http://gratuity.thighs). motivator – otherwise known as the bar of The Red Lion in Manningtree.

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