

The Egg Behind Your Savings

How a fake egg in a hen's nest became the word for money set aside.

A decoy egg kept hens laying

Farmers tucked a real or fake egg into a hen's nest as a decoy, a habit recorded from at least the 1300s, to coax the hen back to that same spot to lay again.

Source: [Phrases.org.uk](https://www.phrases.org.uk)

Porcelain eggs stood in for real ones

Some decoy eggs were porcelain rather than real, placed in the nest so the hen would keep laying fresh eggs beside it.

Source: [Phrases.org.uk](https://www.phrases.org.uk)

Earliest spelling was nest ei

The word appears in English as early as the 1300s, spelled nest ei in Middle English, well before eggs meant money at all.

Source: [Etymonline](https://www.etymonline.com)

A 1686 letter used it for money

One of the earliest known uses for savings comes from a 1686 letter: a sum was left as a nest egg till a farther occasion, meaning kept for later.

Source: [Phrases.org.uk](https://www.phrases.org.uk)

Why an egg became a metaphor for savings

The idea was that the starter egg was never eaten, only added to, so it became a natural symbol for money set aside to slowly grow larger over time.

Source: [Etymonline](https://www.etymonline.com)

Still in use in speeches today

The phrase never faded: in his 2014 State of the Union address, President Obama used nest egg while pitching a new retirement savings bond to encourage Americans to save more.

Source: [Phrases.org.uk](https://www.phrases.org.uk)

IN SHORT

A humble decoy egg once grew into a word for savings, proof a good egg has always meant something worth keeping.

References

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