

To call a spade a spade

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The word «spade» (pala) you may know. But how do you “call a spade”?

To “call a spade a spade” is an idiom. It means that you are going to speak frankly (francamente) about something. In Spanish a similar saying is “llamar al pan, pan y al vino, vino. Let’s look at some examples.

- I am going to call a spade a spade - Mr. Barnier only wants to punish Britain for leaving the EU.
- I am going to call a spade a spade - the situation is a mess.
- Mr. Morales never calls a spade a spade, because he is a cautious diplomat.

The plural is “spades” which can mean more than one spade or a suit (palo) in a card game (picas o espadas). So the “six of spades” is “el seis de espadas”.

There are other words - spadeful and spadework. If you have “money by the spadeful” (en grandes cantidades) you have a lot of money.

Sometimes we have to “do the spadework” for a project, which means that you have to do a lot of the early preparation or analysis (el trabajo preliminar).