



Loose lips sink ships is an American English idiom meaning "beware of unguarded talk".

American WWII poster by Seymour R. Goff.

The phrase originated on propaganda posters during World War II. The phrase was used in posters made by the Seagram Distillers Corporation as part that corporation's contribution to the National Victory Effort and was used on posters by the United States Office of War Information.

The most famous poster that helped popularize the phrase was created for the Seagram Distillers Corporation by the designer Seymour R. Goff (also known by the pseudonym "Ess-ar-gee" or Essargee). This type of poster was part of a general campaign of American propaganda during World War II to advise servicemen and other citizens to avoid careless talk concerning secure information that might be of use to the enemy. The British equivalent used variations on the phrase "Keep mum," while in neutral Sweden the State Information Board promoted the wordplay "en svensk tiger."

The gist of this particular slogan was that one should avoid speaking of ship movements, as this talk (if directed at or overheard by covert enemy agents) might allow the enemy to intercept and destroy the ships.

There were many similar such slogans, but "Loose lips sink ships" remained in the American idiom for the remainder of the century and into the next, usually as an admonition to avoid careless talk in general.