

Etymology of the word **shyster**, extracted from:

POPPLER, James 1996, *A Pragmatic Legal Expert System*, Applied Legal Philosophy Series, Dartmouth, Aldershot. ISBN 1 85521 739 2.

shyster \ˈʃɪstə(r)\ *n* -s [prob. after *Scheuster fl*1840 Am. attorney frequently rebuked in a New York court for pettifoggery] : one who is professionally unscrupulous esp. in the practice of law or politics ...

Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1961)

shyster (ˈʃaɪstə(r)) ... [Of obscure origin.

It might be f. SHY *a.* (sense 7, disreputable) + *-ster*; but this sense of the adj. is app. not current in the U.S.]

... 'A lawyer who practises in an unprofessional or tricky manner; especially, one who haunts the prisons and lower courts to prey on petty criminals; hence, any one who conducts his business in a tricky manner' (*Funk's Stand. Dict.* 1895). Also *attrib.* or *adj.* Orig. and chiefly *U.S. slang* ...

The Oxford English Dictionary (second edition, 1989)

shyster. An unscrupulous lawyer (note that the definition presumes the existence of scrupulous ones) ...

The term does *not* come from—as suggested in various dictionaries—the surname Scheuster, supposedly a lawyer noted for shyster-like practices; from the name of the Shakespearean character, Shylock; ... or from any of the various meanings of *shy* (e.g., to be shy of money). Rather ... *shyster* evolved from the underworld use of *shiser*, a worthless fellow, which derived in turn from the German *scheisse*, excrement, via *scheisser*, an incompetent person (specifically, one who cannot control his bodily functions) ...

Hugh Rawson (1991)
A Dictionary of Invective