

ORIGIN OF
"Balls to the Wall"
and
"The Whole 9 Yards"

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"Balls to the Wall"

"Balls to the Wall" means to directly move or act very fast. The origin of the term is from WWII fighter-pilot slang - aircraft engine throttles were topped by plastic balls, and the throttle was advanced by being pushed forward towards the instrument panel/fire wall. Consequently, when the throttles were at maximum power, the balls were to the "wall" (the instrument panel/fire wall).

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"The whole 9 yards"

The term, "The whole 9 yards", comes from WWII fighter pilots in the Pacific. When an aircraft was armed, the 0.50 calibre machine-gun ammunition belts measured exactly 27 feet in length before they were loaded into the fuselage. Consequently, if a pilot fired all their ammunition at a target, it got "the whole 9 yards."

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