

WORDS OFTEN MISUSED

Good writing entails using the easy everyday words that your readers will understand. However, avoid overworked expressions and professional-sounding phrases that have lost their meanings through overuse or misuse. Unless you are writing for a specialized reader audience, shun technical jargon or phrases in foreign languages.

Choosing the word that conveys your meaning exactly is a talent you can cultivate. Your dictionary will be your ally. Learn to distinguish between the words whose meanings are confused through frequent misuse. Some of them are:

7.1 *Admittance and admission.*

Admittance means actual physical entrance.

Admission means entrance, too, but it also means being admitted to the rights of entrance, as in a club. It also means the fee charged for entrance.

7.2 *Apt, likely, liable and subject.*

Apt suggests an inherent ability.

Likely indicates possibility.

Liable suggests vulnerability to something unpleasant.

Subject implies being predisposed to something.

She is subject to severe headaches.

7.3 *Bar and ban.*

Bar means to block.

Ban, to prohibit.

7.4 *Claim and say.*

Claim means to demand by authority.

Say is the act of stating.

7.5 *Continual and continuous.*

Continual means steady although occasionally interrupted.
Continuous means ceaseless.

7.6 *Eager and anxious.*

Eager means looking forward with enthusiasm.
Anxious implies concern or disquiet.

7.7 *Faze and phase.*

Faze means to disconcert.
Phase suggests a temporary state between changes, or an aspect.

7.8 *Fewer and less.*

Fewer refers to number.
Less is used in regard to degree or cost.

7.9 *Farther and further.*

Farther is used with regard to distance. It means *more remote*.
Further is used with regard to time, quantity or degree. It means *moreover* or *in addition*.

7.10 *Gibe and jibe.*

Gibe means to scoff.
Jibe, to agree.

7.11 *Imply and infer.*

Imply means to suggest.
Infer means to surmise or deduce.

7.12 *Intense and intensive.*

Intense means extreme.
Intensive means concentrated or thorough.

7.13 *Majority and plurality.*

A majority indicates that the winner received more than half the votes cast.
Plurality means the winner received more votes than any other candidate.

7.14 *Over and more than.*

Over should be used in the sense of beyond and above.
More than should be used when reporting numbers.

7.15 *Persons and people.*

Persons refers to individuals in small groups.
People implies human beings in masses.
Seven persons were present.
He represents the Italian people.

7.16 *Sculpture and sculptor.*

Sculpture is the art of carving, molding or hewing ornamental objects from materials such as wood, stone or metal.
A sculptor is the artist who practices the art of sculpture.

7.17 *Secure and obtain.*

Secure means to make safe or to fasten.
Obtain means to gain possession of.

7.18 *Note that—*

Bills are passed.
Treaties are ratified.
Resolutions, constitutions, by-laws and amendments are adopted.
Laws are enacted.

7.19 *Use the terms—postmaster, author, aviator, conductor, director, poet—for both men and women.*

7.20 *Write onward, toward, forward, backward, in regard, instead of onwards, towards, forwards, backwards, in regards.*

7.21 *Use the term feature only when you mean a special attraction or to give particular prominence to an act, event or person. Not all the acts or persons on a program are featured.*

7.22 *Say that a person is a member of an organization. He does not belong to it.*

7.23 *Say last few weeks instead of past few weeks.*

- 7.24 Use the term *enlisted man*, *soldier* or *sailor* as the case may be. The terms *soldier boy* or *sailor boy* suggest children playing war games.
- 7.25 Avoid such terms as *very*, *interesting*, *the following*, *the preceding*, *the above mentioned*, *below*, *the foregoing*.