

Glossary of Usage

ACCEPT, EXCEPT: *Accept* is most often used as a verb meaning "to receive." *Except* is usually a preposition meaning "but for" or "other than." A rare form is *except* used as a verb meaning "to leave out." I can *accept* his offer *except* for the increase in salary.

ADVICE, ADVISE: *Advice* is a noun; *advise* is a verb. His *advice* was to *advise* customers cautiously.

AFFECT, EFFECT: *Affect* is most frequently used as a verb meaning "to influence"; *effect*, the more common form, is most often a noun and means a/the result of an action. A rarer form uses *effect* as a verb meaning "to bring about": Will the war *effect* a change in policy?

AGGRAVATE: *Aggravate* should never be used, as it is in common American slang, to mean "to irritate" or "to bother"; in formal English usage, the term can only mean "to make worse." Certainly, throwing gasoline on a fire will *aggravate* the intensity of the combustion.

AGREE TO, AGREE WITH: *Agree to* should be used to mean "to consent to something"; *agree with* should be used to mean "to be in accord with something." He *agreed to* your proposal, but I can never *agree with* him.

ALL READY, ALREADY: *All ready* means "completely prepared for something," literally *all*—everything, one, etc.—*ready*; *already* is an adverb meaning "before now" or "by now." She has *already* left even though we were *all ready*.

ALL RIGHT: *All right* must always be used as two words; *alright*, although quite common in conversational English—and far too often in written work—is not a word. Slang example: It's *alright* to work on your car in the front yard.

ALL TOGETHER, ALTOGETHER: *All together* means "simultaneously" or "collected together in one place"; *altogether* is an adverb and means "entirely" or "thoroughly." We were *altogether* lost even though we were *all together*.

ALLUSION, ILLUSION: An *allusion* is an indirect reference to some thing, person, work, place—very often a work of literature or religion—etc. An *illusion* is something that is not perceived clearly or even wishful or unrealistic thinking. His *allusions* give him *illusions* of erudition.

ALLUDE, ELUDE: Often confused, *allude* means "to refer to something"—He *alluded* to the Bible. *Elude*, however, means "to avoid" or "to escape capture."—He *eluded* the policeman.

ALMOST, MOST: *Almost* is a common adverb and means "nearly." *Most* is slang and substandard English when used as a substitute for *almost*. Slang example: *Most* all of us are sick today.

A LOT, ALOT: *A lot* is slang, substandard English, but does mean "a great quantity of" something. *Alot* is an egregious writing error and not acceptable in any written work. No doubt the form is a logical spelling, the result of the sound of the conversational expression. Slang example: He gave *alot* of money to the church.

ALUMNI: Although most people unconsciously use *alumni* to refer to any and all graduates of a particular institution, in formal usage *alumni* should be used to refer only to two or more male graduates—*alumnus* to refer to one male graduate—*alumna* to refer to one female graduate—and *alumnae* to refer to two or more female graduates. He is an *alumnus*, and she is an *alumna*, but they are not *alumni*.

AMONG, BETWEEN: *Among* is used to refer to three or more. *Between* should always be used in references to two. An exception to this rule occurs when more than two things are involved but each is considered individually: Do you know the difference *between* the eight parts of speech?

AMONGST, AMONG: *Amongst*, although commonly used in the early 1900's, is now archaic and should be avoided; *among* is always the correct form.

AMORAL, IMMORAL: Do not confuse these words. *Amoral* means "without morals or any governing code of behavior"; *immoral* means "wicked or depraved."

AMOUNT, NUMBER: *Amount* should refer only to quantities that cannot be counted—water, smoke, flour, etc.; *number* should be used with any countable items.

Note that special cases exist with *a number of*, which calls for a plural verb, and *the number of*, which calls for a singular verb. *A number of* students were talking about the *amount* of money required for school.

AND ETC.: Because *etc.* means "and other things," *and etc.*, therefore, means "and and other things" and is clearly redundant. People have a tendency to over use *etc.* In fact, one should avoid using *etc.* in formal and academic writing.

ANXIOUS, EAGER: Be careful; these words are not synonyms. *Anxious* (usually followed by about) means "worried" or "nervous." *Eager* (usually followed by to) means "looking forward" to something. He was *anxious* about his bank account but *eager* to go to the casino.

ANYWHERE, ANYWAYS: These rather common regional slang expressions are not Standard English. Adding an *s* to such words is more common in particular geographical regions.

AS: *As* should not be used in place of *because*, *while*, *whether*, *who*, or *since*; although the practice is common and accepted in certain parts of the United States, the resulting colloquial structures are often confusing.

AS TO: *As to* is not acceptable in Standard English as a substitute for *about*.

AWFUL, AWFULLY: These terms in Standard English are related to *awe*. Neither of the words should be used in their slang contexts to mean "very" or as a synonym for "bad." An example of the word's intended usage appears in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*: "his [Johnson's] awful approach . . ."; Boswell here means "inspiring awe" or perhaps even "intimidating."

BAD, BADLY: In Standard English *bad* must be used only as an adjective; *badly*, then, is the proper form for the adverb. All of the common slang expressions whereby *bad* is used in an ironic context meaning "impressive" or a similar opposite meaning are not acceptable.

BEING AS, BEING THAT: Neither of these slang expressions is acceptable in Standard English; they create a grammatical problem called faulty predication. In most cases use *because* or a similar acceptable form.

BUNCH: In Standard English this word is used only to refer to particular things which grow together in clusters: grapes, bananas, flowers, etc. I bought a *bunch* of bananas. Slang example: His *bunch* came to the reunion.

BURST, BURSTED: *Burst* means to explode or come apart from within; *burst* is not a word although common in substandard English. The pipe *burst* from the pressure. Slang example: My pipes *busted* in the hard freeze. I got angry and *busted* him in the mouth.

BUST, BUSTED: Although *bust* can refer to 1) a statue, usually of the head and shoulders, and 2) the chest or breast, neither *bust* nor *busted* can ever be used as verbs, and no usage as a reference to being "arrested," "caught," or "discovered" is acceptable in Standard English.

BUT: Like *hardly* and *scarcely*, *but* is frequently misused in a negative context and unconsciously becomes part of a double negative. "I could not help *but*" is a common double negative error.

CAN, MAY: *Can* means one "is able" to do something; *may* indicates that one has or receives permission to do something. I *can* certainly climb the mountain, but you *may* not borrow my car.

CAN'T HELP BUT: This very common expression is slang, a double negative, and not acceptable in Standard English.

CAPITAL, CAPITOL: While *capital* has a variety of meanings—the seat of government, money, the opposite of a lower case letter—the word *capitol* refers only to the building that houses government. Most people find it easy to remember the single definition of *capitol* and that, therefore, any other meaning demands *capital*.

CAUSE: Avoid using *cause* as a synonym for *because*; although some dictionaries list *'cause* as an informal substitute for *because*, any abbreviation of *because* is not considered Standard English. Slang example: He did it *cause* he wanted to.

CENTER ON: Although *center on* is an acceptable term, to *center around* is not acceptable. The reason for the preference becomes clear if we consider *to focus on* compared to *to focus around*.

CHILDISH, CHILDLIKE: These two terms are not synonyms because of their connotations. *Childish* means "like a child," but it means everything that is bad about a child—being self-centered, impatient, selfish, etc. *Childlike* also means "like a child," but the term means everything that is good about a child: innocence, spontaneity, etc.

COARSE, COURSE: Often confused, *coarse* means the quality of being other than smooth—rough. *Course*, however, may mean a subject in a school program; a part of a meal; a track, path, or pattern of travel; or used in the figure of speech *of course*. We used *coarse* sandpaper in the woodworking *course*.

COMPLEMENT, COMPLIMENT: Although these words are often confused, *complement* means "to complete; to bring to completion," while *compliment* means "to say something good about someone or something." Both can also be used as nouns. The corsage *complemented* the outfit and earned me several *compliments*.

COMPLETED: *Completed* is a surprisingly common perversion of the standard form *complexioned*; probably because the latter form is somewhat difficult to pronounce, many have grown accustomed to saying—and worse writing—the ungrammatical form *completed*.

CONSCIENCE, CONSCIOUS: Often confused, *conscience* is a noun that means "an awareness of some hierarchy of values." *Conscious*, however, is an adjective and means "to be aware." His *conscience* never bothered him—at least while he was *conscious*.

CONTINUAL, CONTINUOUS: Although many writers use these terms synonymously, they clearly mean different things. *Continual* means that something is "ongoing with infrequent small interruptions." *Continuous* means something that is "ongoing without interruption." Her *continual* tardiness and his *continuous* talking made the class a disaster.

COPE: Although *cope* can be used in a structure with the preposition *with*, it should not be used as an intransitive verb as has become popular in contemporary slang: The man was learning to *cope*.

COUNCIL, COUNSEL, CONSUL: Although the similar pronunciation of these words is the source of their confusion, good writers must use them correctly: *Council* is a noun and means a "group of people who make certain decisions." *Counsel* as a verb means "to advise"; as a noun the word means "one's legal advisor" or "advice" itself. *Consul* is a noun meaning "a government official stationed in a foreign territory." The American *consul counseled* the literary *council*.

CRITERIA: *Criteria* is the plural of *criterion*. Both terms must agree with their respective verbs. The tendency today is to use the form *criteria* regardless of proper agreement. While three of the *criteria* were acceptable, one *criterion* was an insult.

DATA: *Data* is the plural of *datum*. As with *criterion/criteria*, the tendency is to use *data* in all cases. Formal English requires the proper use of agreement. The *data* were readable, but one *datum* attracted our attention.

DESERT, DESSERT: Often confused, *desert* (accent on the first syllable) is most frequently used as a noun to mean an arid waste land and as a verb to mean "to leave or abandon" (accent on the second syllable). *Dessert* is the sweet course usually at the conclusion of a meal. We enjoyed our date *dessert* at the oasis in the *desert*.

DEVICE, DEVISE: *Device* is a noun meaning "something made usually for a particular working purpose." *Devise* is a verb meaning "to plan or elaborate." The problem is the same as the confusion with *advice/advise*. He *devised* a *device* for opening oysters.

DIFFER FROM, DIFFER WITH: *Differ from* means "to be dissimilar." *Differ with* means "to disagree" with someone or something. The structures are not interchangeable. He *differed with* me over how A *differed from* B.

DIFFERENT THAN: The construction *different than* is substandard English and should be avoided. The proper form in Standard English usage is *different from*.

DISINTERESTED, UNINTERESTED: These terms do not mean the same thing; *disinterested* means to be "neutral" about something, as a disinterested party in a court case. *Uninterested*, however simply means "not interested." The most common mistake is to use *disinterested* when one means *uninterested*. The *disinterested* judge directed his comment to the *uninterested* juror.

DUE TO: *Due to* is overused in place of *because of*. If *due to* follows a form of the verb *to be*—*am, is, are, was, were, etc.*—the expression is most likely used correctly. In other cases, by far the majority, *because of* is preferred. The rain is *due to* atmospheric changes, but he failed *because of* his lack of attendance.

EMINENT, IMMINENT, IMMANENT: Often confusing, these words, which sound so very much alike, mean quite different things: *eminent* means "distinguished" or "important"; *imminent* means that something is "on the verge of happening"; *immanent* means "existing within" or "inherent." The *eminent* guest with the *immanent* intelligence is expecting service *imminently*.

ENTHUSED: *Enthused* is a very common slang perversion of the adjective *enthusiastic* and should be avoided in spoken and written English.

ENVELOP, ENVELOPE: *Envelop* (accent on the second syllable) is a verb meaning "to cover, enclose or surround" something. *Envelope* (accent on the first syllable) is the paper wrapper used for mailing something. The spilled ink *enveloped* his *envelope*.

EVERY DAY, EVERYDAY: A very common error in writing: *every day* means, quite literally, every . . . day (no confusion in Spanish: *cada dia*). *Everyday* is an adjective meaning something close to "ordinary" or "simple." She wore an *everyday* dress, but she wore a dress *every day*.

EXIT: *Exit* is a noun meaning "a path or manner of leaving something or somewhere." *Exit* cannot be used as a verb, as it is so often is today in conversation, to mean "to leave." Slang example: Let's *exit* the next road to the right.

FARTHER, FURTHER: Strictly speaking, *farther* means "a greater distance"; *further* means "more" of something, but not distance. The error is thinking that the words mean the same thing. The guide did not speak *further* about going *farther* today.

FATAL, FATEFUL: Not to be confused, *fatal* means "causing or resulting in death." *Fateful* means something which "has the potential for serious and/or momentous consequences." They are clearly not synonymous. The colonel's *fateful* decision precipitated a *fatal* barrage.

FEWER, LESS: *Fewer* refers only to countable items and, therefore, works in conjunction with a plural verb; *less* refers to amounts and consequently takes a singular verb: *Fewer* people, trees, coins, oysters; *Less* money, sugar, flour, time, etc.

FIGURE: Used to mean "expect," "calculate," or "imagine." *figure* is slang and not Standard English. Slang example: I *figure* it'll take a half a hour to fix this here car. (Hiram, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find")

FINE: *Fine* means "related to small particles" or "of high quality." Used to mean "in good health" or as an expression pertaining to the attractiveness of members of the opposite sex the term is slang. Don't use *fine* sandpaper on *fine* china. Slang example: Whoa! That chick is *fine*.

FIX: Used to mean "arrange," "prepare," or "mend," *fix* is clearly substandard English. The slang expression *fixing to* is also slang. Slang example: We was *fixin* to go to town. (worse) He was *fiddin* to do it.

FLAMMABLE, INFLAMMABLE: The terms mean the same thing: Generally, the term *inflammable* should always be used. Does this make sense? No. Try to explain this to ESOL students.

FORMERLY, FORMALLY: *Formerly* means "occurring at an earlier time"; *formally* means "done in a dignified or appropriately serious manner." *Formerly* she had to dress *formally* as the hostess.

FUN: Although *fun* is a common noun, it should never be used—as has become increasingly popular in conversation—as an adjective. Slang example: We had a *fun* party.

FUNNY: *Funny* means "comical" and should never be used to mean "strange," "odd," "unusual," or "exotic." I saw a funny movie. Slang example: After eatin that chili, I have a *funny* feelin in my stomach.

GOOD, WELL: *Good* is an adjective. *Well* is almost always used as an adverb. When *well* refers to health, the word is an adjective. He had a *good* day—he did *well* on his ACT.

GREAT: Standard English usage does not accept *great* to mean "wonderful," "exotic," "happy" or anything else except "large in size": The plans called for a *great* room. Slang example: We has a *great* time at the fair. But "Goodness gracious *great* balls of fire" is correct.

HANGED, HUNG: Two forms of the verb *hang* exist: one form—*hang, hanged, hanged*—means to execute by hanging; the other form—*hang, hung, hung*—means to suspend, as a picture, painting, or laundry. Standard English does not accept the form *hung* as a substitute for the correct forms of the verb meaning *to execute*. The hangman *hung* his coat before he *hanged* the prisoner.

IMPACT: Standard English does not accept the term *impact* to mean "an influence." The abusive form *impacted* is particularly low diction. The word *impact* should be exclusively used to mean "a forceful or violent collision." The *impact* of the car sent the pedestrian into the air.

IMPLY, INFER: *Imply* means "to insinuate or suggest." On the other hand, *infer* means "to conclude or to reach a conclusion." Perhaps their similarity—they are both short and begin with an *i*—is the source of the confusion. I *infer* from what you *imply* that you are ill.

IN, INTO: *In* is related to "location or position." *Into*, however, suggests "movement or some other change of relative position." He was *in* his room, but he came *into* the living room.

INSIDE OF, OFF OF: In virtually all cases, the terminal *of* in the construction of phrasal prepositions is redundant.

IRREGARDLESS: *Irregardless* is colloquial and substandard English. The form *disregardless*, however, is even worse.

IS WHEN, IS WHERE: These constructions are ungrammatical and often create the grammatical error known as faulty predication. Particularly avoid these constructions in an explanation or a definition.

ITS, IT'S: These words are far too frequently confused. *Its* is a possessive personal pronoun—none of which use an apostrophe to show possession; *it's* is the common contraction of *it is*. The form *its'* is not a legitimate construction—it was probably invented for multiple choice examinations. My car is that Ford: *its* color is blue, and *it's* on fire.

LATER, LATTER: *Later* means "coming after something else in time." The *latter* means "the second" of two named items. *Later* he spoke about the *latter* incident.

LAY, LIE: These two verbs are perhaps the most confusing pair in the English language. In order for one to understand their various forms, a chart or otherwise very close comparison is necessary:

Principal parts: lay (to put or place) lay, laid, laid
lie (to rest or recline) lie, lay, lain

In writing or speaking, if one is not certain about a particular form of these verbs, the best alternative is to use one of the less confusing synonyms: *set*, *put*, *place* or *rest*, *recline*, etc. The most commonly abused form is the past tense of *to lie*, to rest or recline: Yesterday he *lay* in the mud four hours waiting to be evacuated.

LEAD, LED: These two verbs are often confused because the past tense and past participle forms—*led*, *led*—sound exactly like the form *Lead*—Pb on the Periodic Table. The present tense form is *lead*—sounding as if it should be written *leed* and pronounced like the word *seed*. Be particularly sensitive to the usage of the past tense form. *Lead* us through the things that *led* to the Civil War.

LIKE: Standard English usage does not introduce any subject and verb combination with the word *like*; instead, one must use either *as*, *as if*, or *that*. Likewise, Standard English does not permit the substitution of *like* when a construction demands *such as*.

LOAN: The word *loan* is always a noun. Standard English avoids using *loan* in its colloquial usage as a verb; one must use the form *lend* as the verb. This problem is related to other similarly abused words such as *exit*. Please *lend* me five dollars. Slang example: *Loan* me five dollars please.

LOSE, LOOSE: These words represent a spelling problem. Remember, *lose* is a verb which means "to misplace something"; *loose* means "not tight." You will *lose* your horse if the rope is *loose*.

MAD: In formal writing *mad* should be reserved for comments on mental health or stability. *Mad* should not be used loosely to mean "angry" or "upset." We would like to be able to think that Hitler was *mad*. Slang example: My boyfriend is *mad* at me.

MAY BE, MAYBE: *May be* is a verb; *maybe* is an adverb meaning "perhaps." Especially avoid the common misspelling *mabey*. *Maybe* I am old; I *may be* in my fifties.

MEDIA: Remember that *media* is the plural of *medium*; therefore, *media* takes a plural verb: Radio is a *medium*, but television and radio are *media*.

MYSELF: Like virtually all of the *-self* forms, *myself* is abused when a writer uses it in place of *me*, especially when one needs an object of a preposition. The *-self* (reflexive) forms should be avoided in formal writing unless the noun or pronoun to which they refer is also present: See the use of the *reflexive emphatic*. He, *himself*, signed first. Slang example: He gave the money to Joan and *myself*.

OK: This form or any of its similar forms—*O.K.*, *okay*, etc.—may not be used in formal Standard English: the terms are all low diction, slang.

ON, UPON: In virtually all cases, a writer should avoid *upon*. Unless one is seeking a singularly formal and particular effect, *on* is almost always the preferred form.

PARTY: *Party* is a noun and should never be used as a verb. Its use as a verb has become widespread in today's conversational English: *Party* as a verb is slang. Slang example: We are going to *party* all weekend.

PHENOMENON, PHENOMENA: Although these two terms are often used without respect to their number, *phenomenon* is singular and *phenomena* is plural. A shooting star is a *phenomenon*, but other natural occurrences are *phenomena*.

PREJUDICE, PREJUDICED: *Prejudice* is a noun; *prejudiced* is an adjective. Do not confuse the two forms. His *prejudice* can be seen in his *prejudiced* remarks.

PRETTY: In all cases *pretty* is abused if it is used to mean "somewhat." *Pretty* means "somewhat attractive" and should be used exclusively in that capacity: She is a *pretty* girl. Slang example: I feel *pretty* good.

PRINCIPAL, PRINCIPLE: These two terms are often confused but should not be: *Principle* is a noun and can mean only "a rule, belief, or an axiom." *Principal*, however, is much more flexible, meaning "chief official," "sum of money," or "foremost or main"—even the official that runs a school. Most find it easy to remember that *principle*

means a rule or belief and that any other meaning, therefore, must be *principal*. Her *principles* were her *principal* problem.

QUOTE: *Quote* is a verb, and particularly in formal Standard English cannot be used as a noun: the noun form is *quotation*: I often *quote* the Bible; its *quotations* are very versatile. Slang example: The *quote* he used was from Ecclesiastes.

REAL, REALLY: In formal writing do not confuse these terms. *Real* is an adjective; *really* is an adverb. They may not be used interchangeably: adjectives can never modify other adjectives. He had a *real* twenty-dollar gold piece, but I was *really* convinced that it was a counterfeit. Slang example: Jordan was *real* tall even for a professional basketball player.

REASON (IS or WAS): This common construction must be followed by *that* (that is to say a clause starting with that) and not *because*. The construction with *because* may cause faulty predication.

SIGHT, CITE, SITE: Particularly these last two terms cause confusion; however, *sight* as a verb means "to observe" and as a noun may mean "vision" itself, "an aiming device," or "a spectacle" of some sort. *Cite* means "to refer to something." *Site* as a verb means "to place" something at a particular location, and as a noun the term means "a particular location." He *cited* a poem on the *site* of the incident.

SINCE: Avoid using *since* to mean because; such usage is colloquial and slang. Use *since* as a preposition in expressions involving time. We have waited *since* noon.

STATIONARY, STATIONERY: Often confused, *stationary* means "remaining in one place"; *stationery* is the writing paper. Fortunately her *stationery* remained *stationary* in the wind.

STUFF: Avoid this slang term; even used associated with taxidermy or cooking, the expression is low diction. Slang example: He brought his *stuff* over to my house. She threw his *stuff* out in the yard after the fight.

SUCH: Never use *such* or *such a* as vague intensifiers. *Such* and *such a* should be followed by clauses beginning with *that*. If your use of *such* or *such a* can be replaced with *very* (*very* would be acceptable usage) or *so* (this usage would be slang), you have used the term(s) incorrectly. Slang example: He did not know what to do about *such*. (not much better) He did not know what to do about *such a* that.

SUPPOSED (TO), USED (TO): Do not forget the silent *-d* that must be used when these words or expressions are used in the past tense. Because we do not hear them, we often leave off the silent *d* when we write. He *used* to drink but was *supposed* to quit. (You know you are in trouble if you spell it *sposed*.)

SURE: Never use *sure* if you need the adverb *surely*. Slang example: I *sure* am tired today.

SURE TO, TRY TO: Be certain to avoid the colloquial expressions *sure and* and *try and*; always use *sure to* and *try to*.

THAN, THEN: *Then* is an adverb relating time. *Than* is a conjunction used in expressions of comparison. The expressions may not be used interchangeably: many times this error is typographical, but their similarity causes confusion for many. *Then* Alice became taller *than* the house.

THAT, WHICH: *That* should always be used to introduce restrictive clauses although *which* is widely used to introduce both restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses. One of writers' most persistent problems is using *which* and *that* in contexts that create *broad pronoun reference* (see next entry).

THAT, THIS, WHICH: Beware of these words used as pronouns to introduce subordinate clauses. If they do not refer to the immediately preceding word—or in rare cases the immediately preceding (small) group of words—the writer is guilty of *broad pronoun reference*. Such problems are very common and often leave a paper very vague. The reader is forced to guess, look up, or otherwise surmise the antecedents of these abused pronouns. When revising, a good method of dealing with these words is to try to supply a noun between the pronoun and the next word in the sentence. While the pronoun will oftentimes represent a reference problem, the noun is able to bear the

weight of the writer's meaning, and the reader is not forced to stop in order to ascertain the antecedent of the writer's pronoun.

THEIR, THERE, THEY'RE: These terms are too often confused. *Their* is a simple possessive pronoun. *There* is a common demonstrative of place, and *they're* is a contraction of *they are*. The confusion among these words is no doubt a result of their similar pronunciations. *Their* problem is right *there*, but *they're* doing little about it.

THEIRSELVES: *Theirselves* is a regional (colloquial) perversion of *themselves*. Avoid the word in all cases of speaking and writing.

THRU: Although spelling *through* as *thru* is common on highway signs and some advertisements, *through* must be used in formal writing. Slang example: I was going *thru* Walmart and met Cousin Sam.

THUS: Avoid using *thus* to mean "therefore" and "for this reason." Never use the incorrect slang form *thusly*.

TO, TOO TWO: In spite of the common and elementary usages of these terms, they are often confused. *To* is a preposition. *Too* is an adverb meaning "also" or "excessively," and *two* is the number between one and three. *Two* uses of *to* is often *too* many.

TOO: *Too* is used correctly if it means "also" or "excessively" (see above). Avoid using *too* as an intensifier meaning "very."

UNIQUE: *Unique* is often abused; it can mean only "one of a kind." Therefore, *more* or *most unique* are absurd constructions: See "absolute adjectives"; these adjectives cannot be modified. For example, one cannot be "somewhat," "rather," or "a little bit" *pregnant* or *dead*. Consider *dead*, *deader*, *deadest* for a minute.

UNDOUBTABLY: *Undoubtably* is a colloquial perversion of *undoubtedly*.

USAGE, USE: *Usage* should be reserved for comments regarding language. *Use* is by far the more widely used form. Verb *usage* often reveals one's heritage.

WAIT ON: Never use the slang expression *wait on* meaning "to wait for someone or thing." *Wait on* should be used exclusively to refer to the service provided by servers of tables in eating establishments. We *waited for* the waiter to *wait on* our table. Slang example: "I'll be back in a minute, Mama, wait on me!" (Bailey Boy, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find")

WAYS: Never use *ways* in place of *way* when referring to distance. Meaning "optional manners of performance," the term *ways* may be used. The abuse is most common in the north central United States (where *nowheres*, *anywheres*, etc., are also common colloquial expressions.)

WHICH, WHO: *Which* should never be used to refer to people. *Who* and *that* may refer to people. *Which* and *that* refer to things.

WHO'S, WHOSE: Because these terms sound alike, they are often confused. However, *who's* is a contraction of *who is*, and *whose* is the possessive form of *who*. *Whose* car is that? and *Who's* going to leave first?

WOULD HAVE: Avoid using *would have* in place of *had* in "if" clauses. If he *had* (not *would have*) known earlier, he *would have* left.

YOUR, YOU'RE: *Your* is the possessive personal pronoun. *You're* is the contraction of *you are*. The terms may not be used in place of each other. *You're* sure of *your* references, aren't you?