

## WORD USAGE

REVISED MARCH 9, 2015 BY STAN GARFIELD

### RECOMMENDED WEB SITES AND BOOKS

- The American Heritage Dictionary (Houghton Mifflin) <http://www.ahdictionary.com/>
- Roget's International Thesaurus revised by Robert L. Chapman (Harper & Row) <http://www.bartleby.com/110/>
- The Elements of Style by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White <http://www.bartleby.com/141/> and <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/020530902X/>
- On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction by William Zinsser <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0060006641/>
- Fumblerules by William Safire <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0385413017/>
- English Grammar for Dummies by Geraldine Woods <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0764553224/>
- Championship Writing - 50 Ways to Improve Your Writing by Paula LaRocque <http://www.marionstreetpress.com/ChampHome.html>
- The Book on Writing - The Ultimate Guide to Writing Well by Paula LaRocque <http://www.marionstreetpress.com/BOWhome.html>
- Marion Street Press <http://www.marionstreetpress.com/>
- Bartleby <http://www.bartleby.com/reference/>
- Merriam-Webster <http://www.m-w.com/home.htm>
- Reference <http://www.reference.com/>
- Word Court <http://www.wordcourt.com/nonflash/index.html>
- Common Errors in English <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/errors/errors.html>
- World Wide Words <http://www.worldwidewords.org/index.htm>

### PLAIN ENGLISH

Nothing is too complex for the use of plain English. Sentences should

1. be of short average length,
2. predominate in the use of active rather than passive voice,
3. use strong instead of weak verbs,
4. predominate in the use of positive, instead of negative form, and
5. use parallel form.

Use of words should avoid

1. old English words (e.g., "hereby"),
2. obsolete formalisms (e.g., "now comes"),
3. redundant phrases (e.g., "each and every"),
4. using long words for short words (e.g., "utilize" for "use"), and
5. word clusters (e.g., "prior to" for "before").

### GENERAL TIPS

Always ensure that a pronoun matches its subject correctly.

- Correct: Each person brings his or her experience to the task.
- Incorrect: Each person brings their experience to the task.

Avoid the use of all upper case letters.

Avoid the use of "/" to combine two words.

When creating documents that may be sent using electronic mail, avoid the use of special fonts, underlining, and bold text due to the possibility these attributes may not be preserved between different mail systems.

Avoid the unnecessary use of graphs, pictures, clip art, and shading.

Assume that any worthwhile presentation will be copied, so ensure that it will reproduce well by avoiding the use of shading and color.



## USING HYPHENS

Use a hyphen to combine words to form an adjective. Do not use a hyphen if both words are not modifying a third word. For example:

- We need to use third-party vendors to sell real-time systems. Each third party we use can help us deliver a system that works in real time.

## USING QUOTATION MARKS

Avoid using quotation marks except when quoting someone or when referring to the spelling or usage of words rather than to their meaning. Do not use quotation marks to indicate colloquial expressions or buzzwords.

### GOOD                      BAD

"Spell better," she said. He seemed pretty "laid back" to me.  
"To" is a preposition. IBM provides "best in class" solutions.

## USING COLONS AND SEMICOLONS

Use a colon to set off a list or an example. Use a semicolon to combine two sentences into one compound sentence, or to separate a list of phrases that contain commas. For example:

- The following cities have domed stadia: New Orleans, LA; Houston, TX; and Indianapolis, IN. NFL football is played in all of these stadia; baseball is no longer played in domed stadia in Seattle or Minneapolis.

## USING APOSTROPHES

Apostrophes are often misused. As a rule, an apostrophe should be used to form a possessive, but not a plural. One exception involves the words "its" and "it's" -- these are often confused. "Its" is the possessive form of "it," and "it's" is the contraction of "it is." Following are examples.

### SINGULAR      PLURAL

PAC	PACs
memo	memos

An apostrophe is used when forming a possessive. For example:

- There are many PACs. Visit a specific PAC's web site to learn more about its agenda.
- When sending out multiple memos, it's a good idea to ensure that each memo's subject is clearly defined and its addressees are listed.

## SINGULAR POSSESSIVES

>From *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White, page 1:

Form the possessive singular of nouns with 's. Follow this rule whatever the final consonant. Thus write,

- Charles's friend
- Burns's poems
- the witch's malice

This is the usage of the United States Government Printing Office and of the Oxford University Press.

Exceptions are the possessives of ancient proper names ending in -es and -is, the possessive Jesus', and such forms as for conscience' sake, for righteousness' sake. But such forms as Achilles' heel, Moses' laws, Isis' temple are commonly replaced by

- the heel of Achilles
- the laws of Moses
- the temple of Isis

The pronominal possessives hers, its, theirs, yours, and oneself have no apostrophe.

## PLURAL POSSESSIVES

When forming the possessive of a plural, the apostrophe goes after the final "s" in the word. If the apostrophe appears before the final "s" in a word, then the word must be singular. For example:

- We have many customers. We understand our customers' problems.
- One customer's problem will not necessarily be the same as another customer's problem, and we are able to propose solutions for most customers.

## COMMON ERRORS IN USING PLURALS

SINGULAR	PLURAL	INCORRECT
alumnus	alumni	an alumni
analysis	analyses	several analysis
criterion	criteria	criteria, criterias, a criteria
medium	media	mediums, medias, a media
phenomenon	phenomena	phenomenons, phenomenas, a phenomena

NOTE: Add "es" to form the plural of nouns when the plural results in an extra syllable. Example: taxes

## EXPRESSIONS THAT ARE OFTEN MISUSED

- begs the questions -- an argument that improperly assumes as true the very point the speaker is trying to argue for is said in formal logic to "beg the question" -- it does not mean "raises the question"
- could care less -- use "couldn't care less"
- don't disagree -- use "agree"
- down the tubes -- use "down the drain"
- showstopper -- means "a wonderful performance," not "an obstacle"

## WORDS TO AVOID USING

- analyzation (not a word) -- use "analysis"
- connotate (not a word) -- use "connote"
- consense (not a word) -- use "achieve consensus"
- consultate (not a word) -- use "consult"
- decomplexify (not a word) -- use "simplify"
- equivalentate (not a word) -- use "is equivalent to"
- hopefully -- use "I hope that" or "it is hoped that"
- incent (not a word) -- use "give incentives for"
- irregardless (not a word) -- use "regardless" or "irrespective of"
- is comprised of -- use "comprises," "is made up of," or "is composed of"
- more/most importantly -- use "more/most important"
- oftentimes -- use "often"
- orientate -- use "orient"
- snuck -- use "sneaked"
- summarization -- use "summary"
- supposingly (not a word) -- use "supposedly"
- unrelentless (not a word) -- use "relentless" or "unrelenting"
- work ethics -- use "work ethic"

## ABBREVIATIONS THAT ARE OFTEN MISUSED

e.g., -- for example (an example should follow, or an incomplete list)

i.e., -- that is (a clarification should follow, or a complete list)

- Note: Always include the periods and follow the second one with a comma (not "eg" or "ie", but "e.g.," or "i.e.,").

etc. -- and so forth (not to be used when referring to people)

et al. -- and others (to be used when referring to people)

- Detroit has some good teams (e.g., the Tigers). Michigan State is also good (i.e., they win). The Pistons give up too many points, rebounds, etc., and the Lions lose winnable games despite their high draft choices – Matthew Stafford, Nick Fairley, et al.

## FREQUENTLY MISSPELLED WORDS

### CORRECT SPELLING INCORRECT SPELLINGS

absence	absense
acceptable	exceptable
achieve	acheive
accommodate	acomodate, accomodate, acommodate
Allegheny	Alleghany
assess	asses
calendar	calender
category	catagory
Cincinnati	Cincinnati, Cincinatti
commitment	committment
congratulations	congradulations
consensus	concensus
consistent	consistant
credibility	credability
definitely	definatly
develop	develope
discrete	descrete
escalation	excalation
essence	essense
excel	excell
existent	existant
expertise	expertice
fanfare	fanfair
farewell	farwell
grammar	grammer
heighten	highten
holistic	wholistic
indispensable	indispensible
initiative	inititive
insight	insite
integrate	intergrate
kernel	kernal
liaison	liason
linchpin	lynchpin, lynch pin
mandatory	manditory
meantime	mean time
mutually	mutially
nickel	nickle
opposed	apposed
perceive	percieve
persistent	persistant
Pittsburgh	Pittsburg
precede	preceed
presenter	presentor
privilege	privalege, privaledge
proceed	procede
protocol	protocal
pursue	persue
questionnaire	questionaire
receive	recieve
relevance	relevance
remuneration	renumeration
response	responce
responsible	responcible
seamless	seemless
separate	seperate

structural	structual
substantial	substancial
CORRECT SPELLING	INCORRECT SPELLINGS

tendency	tendancy
tonight	tonite
through	thru
videotex	videotext
verbiage	verbage
visible	visable
vulnerability	vulnarability

#### FREQUENTLY MISSPELLED COMPANY NAMES

CORRECT	INCORRECT
AlliedSignal	Allied Signal, Allied-Signal
Booz Allen & Hamilton	Booze Allen Hamilton
Caterpillar	Caterpillar, Catepillar, Catipillar
Cincinnati Milacron	Millacron, Millicron, Milicron
Cincom	CIMCOM
COMDISCO	CONDISCO
Eli Lilly	Eli Lilley, Ely Lilly
Hewlett-Packard	Hewlitt Packard
Ingersoll-Rand	Ingersol Rand
Lockheed Martin	Lockhead-Martin
Mallinckrodt	Mallinkrot, Malinckrot
Marion Merrell Dow	Marion Merrill Dow
Morton Thiokol	Morton Thiakal
Navistar	Navastar
Northrop Grumman	Northrup-Grumman
Palette Systems	Palette
Philip Morris	Phillip Morris
Philips	Phillips
Pritsker	Pritzker
Procter & Gamble	Proctor and Gamble
R.R. Donnelley	R.R. Donnelly
Tektronix	Tektronic, Tektronics
Tenneco	Tennaco
Thomson SA	Thompson
Tippins	Tippens
Unisys	Unisis
Volkswagen	Volkswagon
Weyerhaeuser	Weyerhauser

#### COMPANY NAMES THAT CONTAIN HYPHENS

- Anheuser-Busch
- Coca-Cola
- Colgate-Palmolive
- Georgia-Pacific
- Ingersoll-Rand
- Kimberly-Clark
- Temple-Inland

## COMMON ERRORS IN CAPITALIZATION

### CORRECT

### INCORRECT

Ada	ADA
Java	JAVA
Macintosh	MacIntosh, MAC
Microsoft	MicroSoft
Pascal	PASCAL
Web	WEB

Certain words should only be capitalized when they are part of a title:

- I need to visit a different region each month. I will visit the Midwest Region next month.

## NOUNS THAT SHOULD NOT BE USED AS VERBS

- action
- architect
- author
- back burner
- back end, front end
- base line
- bookend
- caveat
- goal
- honcho
- impact
- leverage
- mentor
- metric
- peanut butter
- public
- skill, reskill
- snowball
- solution
- vision (as in "visioning")
- workshop

## VERBS THAT SHOULD NOT BE USED AS NOUNS

- ask
- build
- solve
- take-away

## WORDS THAT ARE OFTEN USED INCORRECTLY

### abbreviation/acronym/initialism

- abbreviation -- a shortened form of a word or phrase

- acronym -- a word (that can be pronounced) formed from the initial parts of a series of words

- initialism -- a group of initial letters used as an abbreviation for a name or expression, each letter being pronounced separately

"USMC" is an initialism of "United States Marine Corps."

"SCUBA" is an acronym for "Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus."

Acronyms and initialisms are two types of abbreviations. So are words such as "apps," which is an abbreviation of "applications."

See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acronym> and <http://www.lyberty.com/encyc/articles/abbr.html>

### accept/except

accept -- to receive with consent; except -- to exclude

I do not accept your attempt to except me from participating.

### access/assess/excess

access -- (noun) ability to enter; a way to approach

access -- (verb) to get at

assess -- (verb) to determine the importance, size, or value of; to impose a tax or other charge on

excess -- (noun) the fact of exceeding something else in amount or degree; the amount or degree by which one thing exceeds another; an extreme or excessive amount or degree

excess -- (adjective) more than or above what is necessary, usual, or specified

In order to assess the damage, I need access to the basement where there is an excess of water.

### adverse/averse/diverse

adverse -- antagonistic or unfavorable, or turned toward the stem or axis

averse -- disinclined or having a feeling of distaste, or turned away from the stem or axis

diverse -- differing from one another

He is averse to diverse forms of exercise, and this has an adverse effect on his health.

### advice/advise

"Advice" is a noun; "advise" is a verb.

When I need your advice, I will ask you to advise me.

### affect/effect

affect -- verb: to have an influence on, bring about change in; to feign

effect -- noun: result; verb: to produce as a result, to execute

- "Affect" and "effect" have no senses in common; therefore the tendency to confuse the words must be guarded against. As verbs, "affect" (the more common) is used principally in the senses of influence ("how smoking affects health") and pretense ("affecting nonchalance to hide fear"), whereas "effect" applies only to accomplishment or execution ("reductions designed to effect economy," "means adopted to effect an end"). As nouns, the terms can be kept straight since "affect" is confined to psychology.

The potion affected me in a strange way, but there were no bad effects.

### allude/elude

allude -- to make indirect reference; elude -- to avoid

He alluded to the fact that I had successfully eluded him.

### amuse/bemuse

The meanings of these two words differ significantly. "Bemuse" = (1) to make confused or muddled; bewilder <the jury was bemused by all the technical evidence>; or (2) to plunge into thought; preoccupy <the math student was bemused with the concept of infinity>. "Amuse," of course, means "to entertain" or "to cause laughter in" <the speaker amused the audience with various anecdotes>. Yet many writers mistakenly use "bemuse" as a synonym for "amuse."

### anecdote/antidote

anecdote -- a short narrative of an interesting or amusing incident

antidote -- something that relieves, prevents, or counteracts

I related an anecdote about the time I needed an antidote for hemlock.

appraise/apprise

appraise -- to set a value on; apprise -- to give notice to  
She apprised me of the appraised value of my coin collection.

ascribe/subscribe

ascribe -- to attribute; subscribe -- to support  
I ascribe your frown to the fact that you don't subscribe to my theory.

born/borne

born -- brought into existence by or as if by birth  
borne -- past participle of "bear"  
The fact that I was born in Illinois was borne out by my father.

breach/breech

breach -- an infraction, a broken area, or a break in friendly relations  
breech -- the buttocks, or part of a firearm or pulley  
Exposing his breech was a breach of etiquette.

cache/cachet

cache -- a hiding place or a secure place of storage  
cachet -- a characteristic feature or quality conferring prestige  
It gives one a certain cachet to have a PC with lots of cache memory.

capital/capitol

"Capital" has several meanings; "capitol" is a legislative building.  
Lansing is the capital of Michigan and the capitol is located there.

calvary/cavalry

calvary -- an experience of intense suffering  
cavalry -- an army component mounted on horseback or moving in motor vehicles  
His calvary was a result of the cavalry attack.

sensor/censure

sensor -- to review communications and delete forbidden material  
censure -- to find fault with and criticize as blameworthy  
The senator was censured for attempting to censor the hearing transcript.

cite/sight/site

cite -- to quote  
sight -- something that is seen, or the process of seeing  
site -- location  
Catching sight of the debate site, the students began to cite facts.

complementary/complimentary

complementary -- serving to fill out or complete  
complimentary -- expressing a compliment, or given free as a courtesy  
Alpha AXP hardware and OpenVMS software are complementary.  
We do not give out complimentary systems; we insist on payment from our customers.

compose/comprise

compose -- to make up; comprise -- to consist of  
The Union comprises 50 states. Fifty states compose the Union. The Union is composed of 50 states.

concomitant/itinerant

concomitant -- accompanying  
itinerant -- traveling from place to place  
Becoming itinerant is concomitant with becoming a professional musician.

conscience/conscious

conscience -- the sense of the moral goodness of one's own conduct

conscious -- aware or awake

I was conscious of the fact that my conscience was bothering me.

contingency/contingent

contingency -- the state of being contingent, or a possible occurrence

contingent -- possible, something contingent, or a quota of persons

We planned for contingencies in the visit of the Russian contingent.

council/counsel

council -- a governing body

counsel -- advice, lawyer, or to advise

I requested that the council meet to counsel me on my choice of counsel.

cubical/cubicle

cubical -- shaped like a cube

cubicle -- a small partitioned space

There was a cubical object sitting on the desk in my cubicle.

delineate/differentiate

delineate -- to portray, or to describe in vivid detail

differentiate -- to mark or show a difference

She differentiated the products by delineating their features.

depended/dependent

depended -- relied

dependent -- subordinate

I depended on you for help, but you were dependent on other people.

desperate/disparate

- desperate -- having little or no hope or extreme/extensive

- disparate -- distinct, unlike another or different in quality or character

The survivors came from two disparate cultures, and were desperate for food.

devote/devout

devote -- to dedicate by a solemn act, or to center the attention

devout -- devoted to religion

She was a devout Catholic and was devoted to serving her church.

discreet/discrete

discreet -- having good judgement in conduct

discrete -- individually distinct

He was discreet in pointing out the discrete crumbs on her coat.

disinterested/uninterested

disinterested - impartial or not taking sides (not having a personal interest at stake.)

uninterested - not interested (not showing any interest)

As a disinterested party, I was asked to mediate the dispute, but I was uninterested in doing so.

dispensation/disposition

dispensation -- a general ordering, an exemption, or the act of dispensing

disposition -- the act of disposing, property transfer, or an inclination

My disposition is to ask for special dispensation from writing the report.

disburse/disperse

disburse -- to pay out

disperse -- to cause to become spread widely

Once I disburse the funds, then you can disperse the crowd.

elapse/lapse

elapse -- vi -- to slip or glide away : PASS

lapse -- vt -- to let slip : FORFEIT

My contract lapsed because too much time elapsed before I decided to sign.

eminent/imminent

eminent -- standing out

imminent -- ready to take place

The hiring of an eminent professor is imminent.

emission/omission

emission -- something sent forth or put into circulation

omission -- something neglected or left undone

Through an omission on my part, my car did not pass the emissions test.

entomology/etymology

entomology - a branch of zoology that deals with insects

etymology - the history of a linguistic form

The etymology of "entomology" is: "from Greek entomon insect (from neuter of entomos cut up, from en- + temnein to cut)

+ French -logie -logy"

faze/phase

faze -- to disturb the composure of

phase -- to adjust so as to be in phase or to introduce in stages

He was not fazed by the need to phase in the new product.

fewer/less

fewer -- a smaller number of persons or things (that can be counted)

less -- a smaller portion or quantity (that cannot be counted)

If you drink less beer, you will consume fewer calories.

flesh out/flush out

flesh out -- to give substance to

flush out -- to force something out of hiding or to clean something (usually by forcing water through a container)

You need to flesh out your proposal to flush out the sewer.

formally/formerly

formally -- in a formal manner

formerly -- in time past

I was formally told that I formerly worked for the company.

formative/formidable

formative -- relating to formation

formidable -- having qualities that discourage approach or attack

We faced many formidable problems during our formative years.

gleam/glean

gleam -- to shine with moderate brightness or to appear briefly or faintly

glean -- to gather grain left by reapers or to gather information bit by bit

From what I was able to glean about the gleaming star, it is in our galaxy.

good/well

"Good" is an adjective; "well" is the adverb form of "good."

It is good that you know how to use the English language well.

historic/historical

historic -- having great importance to human history

historical -- related to the past

The historic debate took place at the historical museum.

hyperbola/hyperbole

hyperbola -- a mathematical curve; hyperbole -- exaggeration.  
Saying "seeing a hyperbola makes me hyperventilate" is hyperbole.

I/me

Always use "me" as the object of a preposition. When there are multiple objects, it is tempting to use "I" because we were drilled as children not to use "me" as the subject of a sentence. This led to overcompensation. Also, when there are multiple objects, "me" should come last.

Correct: She will be presenting to Sally and me. Sally and I are here.

Incorrect: She will be presenting to Sally and I. Sally and me are here.

imply/infer

imply -- to state indirectly, hint, or intimate

infer -- to draw a conclusion or make a deduction based on indications

When I say that you look like you have been eating well, you infer that I think you are fat, but I mean to imply that you look healthy.

incite/insight

incite -- to urge on

insight -- the power or act of seeing into a situation

If you have sufficient insight, you will not incite a riot.

incur/occur

incur -- to meet with (as an inconvenience) or to become subject to

occur -- to appear, to take place, or to come to mind

It occurs to me that you allowed me to incur the cost of dinner.

in lieu of/in view of

in lieu of -- instead of; in view of -- because of

I drink root beer in lieu of beer in view of my fear of becoming drunk.

jibe/jive

jibe -- to be in accord; jive -- swing music or special jargon of slang terms

Your idea doesn't jibe with mine, and it is full of jive.

lead/led

"Lead" is the current tense; "led" is the past tense.

I want Sue to lead the effort to get the team led by Sam to disband.

lets/let's

"lets" is the third-person present of "let," which means allows; "let's" is the contraction of "let us"

Let's hope that she lets us go to the movies.

light-year

the distance that light travels in a year -- a unit of distance, not time

That star is 100 light-years away from us.

loose/lose, losing/losing

loose -- to let loose (pronounced "luce" & usually used as an adjective)

lose -- to miss from one's possession (pronounced "luze" & always a verb)

If they lose any more business, they may have to lose some employees.

moot/mute

moot -- debatable or deprived of practical significance

mute -- unable to speak or refusing to plead directly

Whether or not he was mute became a moot point after the truck hit him.

moral/morale

moral -- relating to principles of right and wrong, or a practical lesson

morale -- mental and emotional attitudes

The moral of the story is that morale drops when moral judgment worsens.

penultimate/ultimate

penultimate -- next to the last

ultimate -- last

Alaska and Hawaii were the penultimate and ultimate states added.

personal/personnel

personal -- private

personnel -- an organization of persons

I would like a personal conference with you to evaluate our personnel.

perspective/prospective

perspective -- the aspect in which a subject is mentally viewed

prospective -- relating to or effective in the future

Her perspective is that the prospective changes are positive ones.

prescribe/proscribe

prescribe -- to dictate or to ordain

proscribe -- to outlaw or to prohibit

All attempts to prescribe drugs will be proscribed.

principal/principle

principal -- most important, or a capital sum placed at interest

principle -- a rule or code of conduct, or an origin

The principal question facing us is whether to adopt new principles.

profitability/profitably

profitability (noun) -- the state of being profitable

profitably (adverb) -- in a manner that is profitable

If we deliver service profitably, our profitability will increase.

prostate/prostrate

prostate -- a male gland

prostrate -- extended in a horizontal position, or overcome

A prostate operation is performed while the patient is prostrate.

reluctant/reticent

reluctant -- opposing or unwilling

reticent -- inclined to be silent or secretive

Although I appeared reticent, I am not reluctant to help you.

rend/render

rend -- to wrest, split, or tear

render -- to melt down, deliver, yield, restore, make, depict, or administer

The verdict that was rendered was heart-rending.

renown/renowned

"Renown" is a noun meaning fame; "renowned" is an adjective meaning famous.

The renowned writer was not comfortable with her renown.

respectfully/respectively

respectfully -- with esteem; respectively -- each in the order given

I respectfully informed my mother and father, respectively.

rife/ripe

rife -- widespread, prevalent, abundant, plentiful, or abounding

ripe -- mature, late, suitable, ready, mellow, or plump  
The meeting was rife with anger, and then ripe tomatoes were thrown.

riff/rift

riff -- an ostinato jazz phrase typically supporting a solo improvisation  
rift -- a breach  
A rift developed between them due to his choice of riff in the solo.

role/roll

role -- a characteristic of an individual, a function, or position  
roll -- to move ahead by revolving (among many other meanings)  
The role that I will play is to take the roll call.

skew/skewer

skew -- to distort from a true value  
skewer -- to fasten or pierce with as if with a pin  
Her view was skewed by the fact that the roast had not yet been skewered.

stationary/stationery

stationary -- immobile; stationery -- letter paper  
I wrote on the stationery while remaining stationary.

tack/tact

tack -- several meanings, one of which is "a course or method of action"  
tact -- a keen sense of what to do or say in order to avoid offense  
You should have used more tact when you decided to take a different tack.

team/teem

team -- a number of persons associated together, or to form a team  
teem -- to be present in large quantity  
The baseball team played on a field teeming with mosquitoes.

that/which

Generally, use "that" to introduce restrictive, or defining, clauses and "which" to introduce nonrestrictive clauses.

- Restrictive: The pencil that needs sharpening is on my desk.
- Nonrestrictive: The pencil, which needs sharpening, is on my desk.

[http://www.kentlaw.edu/academics/lrw/grinker/LwtaThat\\_Versus\\_Which.htm](http://www.kentlaw.edu/academics/lrw/grinker/LwtaThat_Versus_Which.htm)

<http://afterdeadline.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/24/that-which-or-what/>

<http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/which-versus-that-0>

<http://www.getitwriteonline.com/archive/103103whichthat.htm>

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Whichvs.That.html>

that/who/whose

The rule requiring the use of "that" when referring to things and "who" when referring to persons has been relaxed.  
Now you may choose whichever word seems more natural when referring to either persons or things.  
The most impartial judge that could be found ...  
Anyone who can answer my question ...  
That building, whose architect is a local resident ...

the & this

"The" should only be used when referring to a specific instance of a noun.

- Good: We should find out what customers need.
- Bad: We should find out what the customer needs.

"This" should only be used when referring to a specific antecedent.

- Good: Influenza is a common malady. This disease is usually not fatal.
- Bad: We seek profits. So when pursuing this business, sell software.

throes/throws

throes -- a hard or painful struggle; throws -- propels through the air  
After he throws out his back, he is in the throes of a long night.

to/too

"To" is a preposition; "too" means "also" or "excessively."

Eating too much food will cause you to stay up and feel bad, too.

trooper/trouper

trooper -- a cavalryman or a policeman

trouper -- a faithful and good-natured worker

He was a trouper and went on with the show despite the trooper's heckling.

uniform/unilateral

uniform -- conforming to one rule; consistent in conduct or opinion

unilateral -- affecting one side of a subject: one-sided

There was uniform opinion that no unilateral action should be taken.

verse/versus

verse -- writing arranged with a metrical rhythm

versus -- against

The poetry competition featured the verse of Wordsworth versus that of Yeats.

waive/wave

"Waive" means to relinquish voluntarily; "wave" has multiple meanings.

I waved to her and told her I had decided to waive my claim on the land.

whence/where

"Whence" means "from where." "From whence" is redundant.

I asked her whence she came. She said from where she came was a secret.

who's/whose

"Who's" is a contraction of "who is." "Whose" means "relating to whom."

Whose hot sauce is this, and who's going to use it up?

your/you're

"Your" means "relating to you." "You're" is a contraction of "you are."

You're going to have to stop using up your hot sauce so quickly.

## BUZZWORDS, CLICHES, AND PUBLIC SPEAKING EXPRESSIONS TO AVOID (ABRIDGED)

absolutely  
added value, value-added, value add  
and beyond  
architecture  
arguably  
around  
as we approach, as we enter  
bandwidth  
based (when used as a suffix)  
basically  
benchmarking  
best-in-class, best-of-breed, best of the best  
bet the business, bet your business  
bottom line  
business {challenges/issues/needs/objectives/problems}, the business  
buy in, buy into, buy off  
capture  
clearly  
closed loop  
closure  
competitive {advantage/edge}  
comprise  
critical (when used to mean very important)  
crucial  
delight  
dialogue  
disconnect (as a noun)  
drive (except in relation to driving a vehicle)  
empowered  
enterprise  
environment  
feedback  
finalize  
focal point, focus (except in relation to a lens)  
framed up  
framework (except an engineering design management framework)  
front-end  
global  
goodness  
gridlock  
grow the business, grow your people  
{both/two} hands on the wheel  
headset  
impact (as a verb), impactful  
infrastructure  
input  
internalize  
leadership (as an adjective)  
leading edge  
learnings, a learning  
leverage  
line of sight  
major  
mega (as a prefix except when it specifically means one million)  
methodology  
metrics, metric (as a verb)  
mission-critical  
move forward, go forward, going forward

must (when used to pontificate)  
net it out  
new millennium, next millennium, 21st century, etc.  
no-brainer  
norm  
obviously  
off-line  
on board  
outside the box, outside nine dots  
overarching  
own, ownership (other than of possessions)  
paradigm, paradigm shift  
parse (except in the context of grammar or computer science)  
partner, partnership  
perspective  
planful  
playing field  
position (as a verb)  
prioritize  
proactive  
process  
proof point  
push back  
raise the bar  
rationalize  
reality check  
resonance, resonate  
revisit  
rich  
roadmap  
room (when personified, as in "what does the room think?")  
scenario  
seamless  
sense [my sense is, do some sensing]  
share, sharing  
showstopper  
space  
speak to  
spot on  
stake in the ground  
standpoint  
strategic  
straw horse, straw man  
synergy, synergistic, synergism  
takeaway  
template  
thrust  
thumbprint  
tied out  
timeframe  
total solutions  
ultimate  
up front  
utilize  
versus, vs.  
very senior  
via  
viable  
virtual, virtually  
vision, visioning

vital  
win-win  
work it, working the issue  
world-class