

Business Communications BUS2 100W

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What you should already know

The eight parts of speech

- Noun
- Verb
- Adverb
- Preposition
- Pronoun
- Adjective
- Conjunction
- Interjection

If you can't identify the parts, review them online at:

<http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/partsp.html>

Computer skills

This class requires you to access the internet, send email, and upload files.

All out-of-class assignments must be typed on a word processor that has a spelling and grammar checker. You will lose significant points for any misspellings or grammar mistakes that a computer would find. You will also create Power Point slides for your final project.

Emails must be professional in tone. If you aren't sure about your writing, compose your email in a word processor first, spell and grammar check it, and *then* send it.

If u like 2 get fs in class, use chat abbrev and no caps. LOL. :-)

Punctuation: Commas

Separate items in a series of more than two:

Hassan likes biology, chemistry, and physics; I think he'll be a scientist.

For complex lists, separate items with semicolons:

Georgina is now managing groups in Macon, Georgia; Raleigh, North Carolina; Salem, Oregon; and Junction City, Kansas.

Place a comma *after* an introductory phrase but *never before* an ending phrase:

After hours of painstaking research, Allana started writing her report.
Allana started writing her report after hours of painstaking research.

Join two sentences with a comma + conjunction (FANBOYS), or use a semicolon:

Jose likes Maria; Maria likes Jose.
Jose likes Maria, but Maria doesn't like him.
Jose likes Maria, and Maria like Jose; it's a match made in heaven.

COMMA SPLICE ERROR: Jose likes Maria, Maria likes Jose.

You *cannot* join two complete sentences with a comma. You must have a conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so = FANBOYS).

Use a semicolon to join two sentences using a conjunctive adverb such as *however, therefore, nevertheless, for example, and in fact*.

Raises tend to increase productivity; for example, last year our productivity increased 4% after the annual pay raises.

The Acme project promises high profits; however, we should proceed with caution.

Editing marks

Mark	Meaning
abbrev	Abbreviate or check abbreviation
agr	Agreement error, typically subject-verb problems (I be a student)
awk	Awkward language, unclear
Caps or <u>sjsu</u>	Capitalize
C S	Comma splice (two complete sentences connected incorrectly with a comma). Fix by adding a conjunction or change comma to semicolon or period.
frag	Fragment, incomplete sentence
ital	Italicize or remove italics
^	Insert
l.c.	Make it lowercase
mod	Misplaced or dangling modifier, or the modifier is unclear
¶	Start new paragraph
//	Parallel structure
P V	Passive voice
Ref	Unclear reference
sp	Spelling error or spell out
↺	Transpose (switch positions), refers to words and letters
WC	Word choice
WW	Wrong word
?	Unclear meaning

Project Report

You will write a formal report analyzing an aspect of business applicable to your field of study.

Format:

You will turn in various parts of the report at different times. These will be graded in addition to a grade for the entire report.

8-10 pages, double-spaced, 11 point Times Roman or similar font, 1" top and bottom, 1.25" side margins
Title page
Summary
Introduction, purpose
Body
Conclusion or Recommendations
Bibliography

Topics:

You will choose your own topic, but your topic *must* involve research using at least 5 academic sources, such as peer-reviewed journals, and 8 total sources. Sample reports:

- Problem-solving report where you analyze a business problem and offer a solution. What are the tax effects of offering health benefits to employees at a particular small business?
- Strategic report where you provide a path for a business to follow. Acme Corp should relocate its headquarters to Raleigh, NC because...
- Feasibility report where you analyze the economic or technical feasibility for a business market. For example, does it make economic sense to outsource medical transcription?
- Investigative report where you analyze facts surrounding an event or process. This report typically concludes with answers for why something is the way it is or why something happened the way it did, such as why "dot coms" became "dot bombs"

Common problems:

Narrow your topic. Many students try to tackle too much.

Don't wait. The more you do early on the better off you'll be.

Do some preliminary research before you choose your topic. Is there enough information for you to work with?

Organize your thoughts before you write. Index cards are helpful.

Assess your resources and hone your list to the best.

Address any opposition to your topic.

Seven Cs of Communication

- Clear writing means the reader can understand what you write, and your grammar, word choice, and mechanics (punctuation) are accurate.
- Correct writing refers to the content. Your writing shouldn't hide the truth.
- Concise writing uses as few words as are necessary to convey your meaning.
- Concrete writing uses specific terms not vague ones.
- Coherent writing is ordered logically and has structure.
- Complete writing covers all the necessary information.
- Courteous writing addresses the reader appropriately for the situation. The language you use should focus on the situation and the facts and not blame or accuse.

Fix this paragraph:

Your school violates state education codes. Parents have the ability to choose whether or not their kids wear uniforms to school and this is how it should be. When you break the law, you pay the price. Our students need to know they can't be punished by you for not wearing the uniforms. So, you can't send my son to detention for not wearing the ugly gray and green clothes you like so much.

Eight steps for revision

Use this list in conjunction with the six steps for writing from the course text.

Start with the sentence:

1. Use concise nouns (subjects) and strong verbs (predicates). Ask who or what is doing the action.
2. Use active voice, not passive. Search for forms of *be*—a weak construct—and use of the word *by*, both of which are used with passive voice.
3. Use the correct verb tenses.
4. Eliminate jargon and buzzwords, particularly by reducing noun strings to simplified nouns.
5. Check modifiers. Can the sentence be read two ways?

Move to the structure:

6. Use bulleted lists, numbered lists, and section headings as appropriate to organize content.
7. Organize your content with a clear method, such as
 - time sequence (start to finish, tracing backwards via investigation or analysis)
 - physical position (regions, locations)
 - importance (least to most or vice-versa)
 - views (specific to general or vice-versa)
8. Format the content for the purpose.

Example:

“The human resources employee survey newsletter deadline is Friday.”

The verb “is” is a weak construct. We need a strong and clear subject, not the noun string “human resources employee survey newsletter deadline”, which we can change to “the deadline for the newsletter” or if you must “the deadline for the employee survey newsletter that HR is producing”. But you can see how the first example is easier to understand. “HR is producing a newsletter to explain the results of their employee survey. The deadline for the newsletter is Friday.” Even this could be confusing if you are unfamiliar with the “employee survey.” Perhaps this works better:

“By Friday you should receive a newsletter from HR that explains the results of the employee survey. The survey asked employees...”

Sample Letter 1: Repair request

Mr William Ladd, 123 Main Str, san jose, Calif. 95110

Drear Acme printer tech support representative,

Last week for my new computer I bought a ACME printer from Widget the online store and had it shipped to my house. It was easy to by, but it was lost in shipping and then found and delivered to me broken.

I'm sure my warranty covers this, but I don't know if I should return the entire printer or you send me a replacement version or fix it.

Please call or email me to say what I should do.

Thanks,
Bill Ladd

Letter: School Board

President Veronica Lewis
San Jose Unified School District
855 Lenzen Ave.
San Jose, CA 95126-2736

Via fax: 408-535-2362

18 August 2005

Re: School uniform policy

Dear President Lewis:

I'm writing to request an addition to the SJUSD policies and procedures. Currently, the district has a written guide for how parents and school administrators can implement school uniforms. However, there are no written guidelines for how to repeal such a policy.

Many schools implemented their uniform policies long before current parents had children in the district. I believe the district should have a repeal policy so that current parents can decide what is best for their children. For example, I recently spoke with several parents who were concerned that they would have to buy new shoes, new jackets, as well as new uniforms and new PE clothes because the school has a very strict policy. I notified them of their rights to opt out, even if all they do is opt out of the shoe and jacket parts of the policy.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to request that the Board examine the policies at schools that have uniforms. Many of the schools are not following district guidelines and state education codes. Also, after contacting the ACLU, I learned that some of the policies could be violating students' First Amendment rights.

There are two subsections under Education Code section 35183 that apply here:

(e) The governing board shall provide a method whereby parents may choose not to have their children comply with an adopted school uniform policy.

(f) If a governing board chooses to adopt a policy pursuant to this section, the policy shall include a provision that no pupil shall be penalized academically or otherwise discriminated against nor denied attendance to school if the pupil's parents chose not to have the pupil comply with the school uniform policy. The governing board shall continue to have responsibility for the appropriate education of those pupils.

Many schools advertise uniforms as "mandatory" and do not notify parents of their right to opt out of the uniform policy. I encourage you to let parents know of their rights by including this option on all information about the uniforms. (When advertising uniforms, many schools also exclusively refer

people to Merry Mart, and this exclusivity likely violates state "sole source" policies.)

Also, schools are not to reward students for wearing the uniform properly, nor are they to punish those who don't wear the uniform. This treatment is a form of discrimination. For example, some schools hand out candy or popcorn coupons to students who are dressed in the uniform. Other schools threaten children with "contracts", "community service", and loss of privileges to attend school dances if they don't wear the uniform.

I encourage the Board to get information from the ACLU regarding students' rights and then disseminate it to the school principals. The ACLU national and local websites have excellent information, including the following:

When a school's dress code is used to ban clothes because they have certain slogans, then it really becomes an issue of free speech and not just personal appearance. The school should not ban any slogans unless they are libelous, obscene or somehow very disruptive.

From what I've read, some schools are currently violating First Amendment rights by prohibiting writing, logos, and other forms of free speech that appear on buttons, pins, and backpacks. See the following links for information:

- <http://www.aclunc.org/students/guide/dress.html>
- <http://www.greatschools.net/cgi-bin/showarticle/ca/361>

The Great Schools website includes a reference to a book that discusses the research regarding school uniforms. (*The School Uniform Movement and What It Tells Us About American Education: A Symbolic Crusade*, David Brunsma) The research does not support the claims made for uniforms. Educators and administrators should follow solid research and not anecdotes or emotions when making decisions regarding student education.

Please feel free to contact me for more information. I would like to know how the Board will proceed with this issue so that I can attend any meetings that discuss it.

Sincerely,

Kelly A. Harrison

cc: Don Iglesias, Superintendent

Focus Sheet

Use a focus sheet to help plan any document you write. Copy this page and use a fresh copy for each assignment. This focus sheet is a slight modification of that which appears on pages 12-13 in *Write to the Top*.

1. Purpose

A. Why am I writing this document? _____

B. What do I want the reader to do or how do I want them to react? _____

2. Audience

A. Who exactly is my reader or readers? _____

B. What is the reader's role: decision maker, influencer, implementer, buyer? _____

C. What does the reader know already? _____

D. How will the reader react to my message: receptive, indifferent, resistant, excited?

E. What's in it for the reader (the "so what")? Why should they read this or agree with it?

F. How will the reader use the document? _____

G. What cultural issues might affect the communication? Ethnic? Corporate? Language? Social? _____

H. Should anyone else receive this? _____

3. Bottom Line

A. If the reader were to forget everything else, what one main message do I want the reader to remember? _____

B. *So what?* What is the impact of my bottom line? _____

4. Strategy

A. Should my message be a document? Would a phone call or meeting be more effective? _____

B. Timing: Am I too early or too late to send it? What is the deadline? _____

C. What is the distribution list? Confirm this.

D. Is someone else communicating the same information? How can I confirm this?

E. Which delivery method do I need?

☐ Printed report

☐ Fax

☐ Email

☐ Internet / web page

☐ Meeting

☐ Presentation

☐ Postal delivery

☐ Video conference

☐ Intranet, WAN,
LAN, network

☐ Courier

☐ Other

☐

Employee Performance Reviews

This form appears in “The Literate Executive” by Laurie Rozakis.

Performance Standards	Ranking and Details
1. Job Skills	
applies skills appropriately	_____
understands tasks	_____
understands role within company	_____
continues training	_____
takes initiative	_____
2. Oral Communication Skills	
verbal expression clear	_____
listens well	_____
solicits responses	_____
3. Written Communication Skills	
written expression clear	_____
writes concisely and clearly	_____
4. Interpersonal Skills	
interfaces well with others	_____
effective team member	_____
promotes open communication	_____
manages diversity	_____
5. Leadership Skills	
inspires teamwork	_____
positive role model	_____
confident	_____
encourages idealism	_____
resolves conflicts well	_____
6. Ability to Make Decisions	
analyzes and evaluates choices	_____
makes and implements decisions	_____
accepts responsibility	_____

7. Ability to Solve Problems

identifies problems _____
analyzes solutions _____
chooses best course of action _____
seizes opportunities _____

8. Organizational Skills

staff selection skills _____
policy management ability _____
evaluation skills _____
delegates responsibility _____
budget planning _____
expense control _____
maintains deadlines _____
achieves goals _____

9. Planning Skills

implements change _____
establishes priorities _____
coordinates resources _____
sets schedules _____
maintains schedules _____
manages time well _____

10. Creativity

innovative thinking _____
original concepts _____
fresh approaches _____

Overall Performance Rating _____

Summary

1. Strengths

2. Areas for Improvement

3. Personal Growth and Development

4. Next Year's Goals

Employee Response (Attach additional pages, if necessary)

Employee's Signature

Date

Supervisor's Signature

Date

Elevator Pitch

The Art of the Elevator Pitch

By Robert Pagliarini of SeekingCapital.com

<http://www.businessknowhow.com/money/elevator.htm>

What is an "Elevator Pitch"?

An "Elevator Pitch" is a concise, carefully planned, and well-practiced description about your company that your mother should be able to understand in the time it would take to ride up an elevator.

What an "Elevator Pitch" is not:

It is not a "sales pitch." Don't get caught up in using the entire pitch to tell the Investor how great your product or service is. The Investor is "buying" the business, not the product. Tell him/her how you will run the business.

Creating the "Elevator Pitch"

Six questions your "Elevator Pitch" must answer:

1. What is your product or service?
Briefly describe what it is you sell. Do not go into excruciating detail.
2. Who is your market?
Briefly discuss who you are selling the product or service to. What industry is it? How large of a market do they represent?
3. What is your revenue model?
More simply, how do you expect to make money?
4. Who is behind the company?
"Bet on the jockey, not the horse" is a familiar saying among Investors. Tell them a little about you and your team's background and achievements. If you have a strong advisory board, tell them who they are and what they have accomplished.
5. Who is your competition?
Don't have any? Think again. Briefly discuss who they are and what they have accomplished. Successful competition is an advantage-they are proof your business model and/or concept work.
6. What is your competitive advantage?
Simply being in an industry with successful competitors is not enough. You need to effectively communicate how your company is different and why you have an advantage over the competition. A better distribution channel? Key partners? Proprietary technology?

What your "Elevator Pitch" must contain:

1. A "hook"
Open your pitch by getting the Investor's attention with a "hook." A statement or question that piques their interest to want to hear more.

2. About 150-225 words
Your pitch should go no longer than 60 seconds.
3. Passion
Investors expect energy and dedication from entrepreneurs.
4. A request
At the end of your pitch, you must ask for something. Do you want their business card, to schedule a full presentation, to ask for a referral?

Example of an "Elevator Pitch"

Here is what I'd use to "pitch" SeekingCapital.com:

SeekingCapital.com is changing the future of private equity investing.

Private equity is a \$100 billion a year market, with over 400,000 entrepreneurs aggressively seeking capital at any given time.

SeekingCapital.com offers entrepreneurs and investors an efficient and uniquely interactive method for obtaining or investing capital in pre-IPO companies.

SeekingCapital.com is not an "Internet only" company, but supports its online community with local franchises in the United States and internationally.

Our team has decades of experience in the securities industry, investment banking, private equity, and executive management. My partner and I have worked together side by side for several years co-managing and running the entire Internet operations of a publicly traded brokerage firm.

Our competitors such as XYZ Corp. and ABC Capital have had much success-ABC Capital was recently valued at \$550 million . . . despite several limitations.

SeekingCapital.com isn't just a listing or matching service, we offer a community that breeds interaction, education, and discussion. We work with companies globally, through all stages of funding, and across all industries.

We are anticipating \$XXX million this round to be used for employee building, increased office space, and marketing.

We have a compelling two page executive summary that I would like to send you. Can I get your address?

About the Author:

Robert Pagliarini is the CEO of SeekingCapital.com-an online and offline community that offers entrepreneurs a cost-effective, efficient, and uniquely interactive method for obtaining capital while offering qualified investors access to select pre-screened, pre-IPO investment opportunities.

Preparing Your Elevator Speech

By Dale Kurow

<http://www.networkingforprofessionals.com/DK.php>

So, what's an elevator speech, and how do you get one?

What Is It?

An elevator speech is a short (15-30 second, 150 word) sound bite that succinctly and memorably introduces you. It spotlights your uniqueness. It focuses on the benefits you provide. And it is delivered effortlessly.

Elevator speeches are intended to prepare you for very brief, chance encounters in an elevator. But elevator speeches are not just for elevators! You should use it whenever you want to introduce yourself to a new contact. That could be in the supermarket, waiting in line at an ATM or when you get your morning latte.

So, who better than you to describe with passion, precision and persuasiveness what you do? A great elevator speech makes a lasting first impression, showcases your professionalism and allows you to position yourself.

And if you want to network successfully, you need an elevator speech!

How to Prepare an Elevator Speech, or What's My Line?

Now for a short course in preparing your elevator speech, or unique selling proposition.

First, and most important, think in terms of the benefits your clients or customers derive from your services

Trust me, no one is going to be riveted if you say:

"Hi, my name is Stanley Manly, and I'm a public relations executive with twenty years of experience."

Or:

"Hi, I'm Sally Hopeful, and I'm an executive recruiter.

Two big yawns.

What's In It for Me?

Do you recall that old radio station, WII-FM: What's In It For Me?!

If you remember that people are always more interested in how you can help them, you're on the right track. Keep that top of mind when composing your speech.

Here's how to improve the two examples mentioned above:

"Hi, my name is Stanley Manly, and I help inventors tell the world about their inventions."

"Hi, I'm Sally Hopeful. I partner with companies that need to find talented people to help their business growth and become more profitable."

Now, you've got my attention!

Let's use my elevator speech before and after as an example:

Here's my before version (and I wondered why people looked at me with a frozen smile!):

"Hi, I'm Dale Kurow, and I'm a career and executive coach. I hold a Master's Degree in Career Counseling and have been trained by a master level coach. (Who cares!) I've been an HR director for a multinational cosmetic company, run a PR agency and taught college-level business courses. (So what!) I believe that coaching can be the catalyst to change your life. (Are you asleep yet?)

See how that was all about me, me, me?

Now for the revised version:

"Hi, I'm Dale Kurow, and I help people become more successful at their work. For example, I've helped a client change jobs with a 40% salary increase, I've helped a client develop the skills to deal with a difficult boss, and I've helped a manager devise new ways to keep her staff motivated."

Here are a few more examples:

I know an Avon representative who says:

"I help women look beautiful."

Or a business coach that says:

"I help you get more clients than you know what to do with."

And here's my favorite, one that is used by an IRS agent:

"I'm a government fund-raiser."

Action Steps

So, here's what you need to do to craft your elevator speech.

First, write down the "deliverables" -- the services or features that you provide. Then, think in terms of the benefits that your clients or employer could derive from these services. You could use several successful client outcomes, as I did.

Once you've got that written, create an opening sentence that will grab the listener's attention, as our Avon representative did above. The best openers leave the listener wanting more information. And you do not have to include your title, especially if you think it has a negative connotation (an IRS agent, for example).

Finally, your elevator speech must roll off your tongue with ease. Practice your speech in front of the mirror and with friends. Record it on your answering machine, and listen to it. Do you sound confident? Sincere? Is it engaging? Tweak accordingly. Then, take it on the road!

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About the Author: Dale Kurow is a career and executive coach in private practice. She helps individuals find success and personal enrichment at their vocations and works with corporations to maximize the potential of valuable employees.

Bureaucratese

Editorial notebook: Clear as mud at Sac City Unified

By Pia Lopez

Published 2:15 am PDT Friday, August 12, 2005

Sacramento Bee

Mandy Carrillo, student member of the Sacramento City Unified School District board, has a point. The way staff and board members speak and write is not understandable to a majority of people. She'd like to see somebody be in charge of "translating" district documents for the public and/or providing a glossary of terms to people.

Better yet, why not simply speak and write in language that people understand from the get-go?

The use of bureaucratese, new fad terms and acronyms is a way of shutting out all but insiders. If district staff and school board members truly are interested in what they call "public engagement" (a fad term that seems to mean finding ways to involve people in issues affecting Sacramento schools), they need to speak and write simply and clearly.

Here are just a few examples from the school board's Aug. 8 workshop that would leave anyone's head spinning by the end of a three-hour meeting.

The agenda for the workshop listed "e21" as the first issue. At the meeting, staff and board members referred to "e21" countless times. Yet not once did anyone say what "e21" stands for. Surely, someone could explain that it stands for "Education for the 21st Century" and refers to the district's plans for high school reform.

Staff members referred to SLCs innumerable times: "distinct, focused SLCs," "classes taken within SLCs," "thematic SLCs," "SLC integrity." These are "small learning communities," but no one explained those either. You just had to know that these are "schools within a school" of about 300 students each at the district's large high schools.

Staff and board members went on at length about "advisories," whatever those are. They mentioned "ROP courses." They referred to CAHSEE. That would be California's high school exit exam. Then there was AYP, FUA, MOU, CPT, SIFs.

Is your head spinning yet? If not, there's more.

At the beginning of the workshop, the superintendent presented a "Five-Phase Decision-Making Template." Only at the end of the three-hour meeting did she announce a timeline, beginning with the Phase I gathering of ideas in August and ending with school board decisions by December (Phase IV) and implementation in January 2006 (Phase V). But in the entire three-hour meeting, no one ever explained what the board was going to be making decisions about!

Carrillo really is on to something. When board and staff don't speak and write clearly, it hampers their ability to connect with the public. It also shows fuzzy thinking. Board and staff don't need glossaries and "translated" documents. They need clear thinking about the audience they're trying to reach and a working knowledge of plain English before they present information to the public.

Logical fallacies

These are adapted from <http://www.datanation.com/fallacies/index.htm>, a site that mentions more than 70 logical fallacies.

False dilemma: choices are limited. “Either you support the war or you support the terrorists.”

Argument from ignorance: if you can’t prove it’s false, it must be true. “Since you cannot prove that ghosts do not exist, they must exist.”

Slippery slope: if one thing happens, a series of events will result. “If I make an exception for you then I have to make an exception for everyone.”

Complex question: two unrelated ideas are conjoined so that the audience feels they must reject or accept both ideas as one. “Americans are for freedom and fighting terrorists.”

Ad hominem, attacking the person: instead of arguing against an issue, someone argues against the person. “John Kerry is one of those rich liberals we can’t trust.” Or “Bush just wants the tax deductions for his rich friends.”

Appeal to authority: using someone who isn’t an expert to support a claim. “Dr. Doe says there’s no such thing as global warming.” Dr. Doe isn’t a climatologist or scientist who has studied these effects.

Hasty Generalization: one person or idea cannot stand for the whole. “The clerk in Admissions and Records wouldn’t help me. No one at this university cares about my problem!”

Post hoc ergo propter hoc: something that happened isn’t necessarily the cause of what happened next. “After my dog swam in the pool, his fleas were gone.” This implies that the pool (or its chemicals) killed the dog’s fleas.

Begging the question: restating the conclusion from the premise. “Because I’m not lying, I’m telling the truth.” They both say the same thing.

What is a syllogism?

Premise A, Premise B, therefore conclusion C.

All German Shepherds are dogs.

All dogs are mammals.

Therefore, all German Shepherds are mammals.

Compare the above with this:

All German Shepherds are dogs.

All German Shepherds are mammals.

Therefore, all mammals are dogs.

Format:

A = B

B = C

∴ A = C

Not:

A = B

A = C

∴ B = C

ASK ANNIE (Fortune Magazine)

Business Buzzwords That Make You Gag

<http://www.fortune.com/fortune/annie/0,15704,1089754,00.html>

Readers wrote in with their nominees for this column's first-ever Most Annoying Lingo awards (the Mallies). Find out which phrases they would like purged from our professional conversations.

By Anne Fisher

Dear friends, while musing (well, okay, griping) two weeks ago about little irritants like the expression "think outside the box" or "keep me in the loop," I asked you to tell me which expressions in common business use today make you grit your teeth—and, man, did you tell me. I confess I was surprised at the sheer volume of your answers, many of which were hilarious. Thanks—I had a great time reading them! And I'm sure you will too. You even might be surprised to find out how many of these frustrating phrases wind up in your own conversations. (I'm guilty of using one on occasion.) Now, without further ado, let's start going through the nominees. I've listed them in order of the number of votes that they received. So you'll have to read all the way to the end to find out this year's Mallie winners for Most Annoying Lingo. Hint: The first President Bush popularized one of them.

* Bottom line, when it refers "not to an entry on a financial statement but to a conclusion the speaker wants to force you to accept," writes KB.

* Shooting someone an e-mail or firing off an e-mail. "This makes me cringe," writes Mary.

* A challenge or an issue, when what the speaker really means is a problem.

* No-brainer. Suggests Mitch, "Maybe we could redefine this to mean a person who says it."

* "At the end of the day..." Several readers complained that attorneys nowadays seem to start every other sentence this way. Adds Brian T., "At the end of the day, what really bugs me is people saying 'at the end of the day.'" Is he a lawyer?

* "Isn't this cool?" Heard at "any Microsoft presentation of any new software," one reader notes. "Is it a rhetorical question, or do these people have a very limited vocabulary?"

* Hit the ground running. Oops. I used this one in a recent magazine column. Sorry!

* Touch base, as in "Let's touch base on this tomorrow." Says Bill G.: "I don't want to touch anyone's base. It sounds as if it would lead to a sexual harassment lawsuit."

* Going forward, as in, "Going forward, let's try not to use so many dumb clichés." Wonders Dave M: "What else would we do? Go back in time?" As if!

- * Win-win. The cynics among us loathe this one with a passion. Writes Stacy, "It could as easily be 'lose-lose,' since neither party really wins." Okay, then!
- * Core competencies. "If I hear the head of my division use this phrase one more time, I'm going to throw something at him," writes Jim. "Something heavy." Yikes. Division heads everywhere, you've been warned.
- * Mission-critical. Some of you hate this expression because it is frequently used to imply that one person's contribution to a project is less important than someone else's. Others, meanwhile, just think it sounds pretentious when businesspeople talk as if they were flying the Space Shuttle.
- * Thought leader. "Can you please kill this expression?" asks P.J. "It was bad enough to see PR people describe someone as a thought leader, but when I saw someone call himself a thought leader in his own bio, I wanted to throw up."
- * Reference used as a verb, as in, "Please reference page 12 in your training guide." What's wrong with the (grammatically correct) phrase "refer to"—or just "look at?"
- * Ping, as in "I'll ping you on this when I hear back from legal." This bit of tech jargon "has jumped the fence into the non-tech world," writes Scott. Let's send it back.
- * There is no "I" in "team." Some of you are so weary of hearing this, you've taken to snapping, "But there is an 'M', and look! An 'E'!" Tsk, tsk.
- * Radar screen, as in, "I'd like to get on your radar screen for a meeting next week." Asks Oliver, "What are we, air traffic controllers?"
- * Bleeding edge, as in, "This is bleeding-edge technology." Yuck. Can we put this one out of its misery?
- * Keep me posted or I'll keep you posted. Notes one astute reader, "These are usually conversation-enders indicating that no further information will be exchanged."
- * Circle back , as in, "I'm just circling back to you on this", which is often "a cutesy way of pestering you for a progress report that you're probably not ready to give," says Kate.
- * On the same page. Third runner-up: 78 readers wrote to say they would be happy never to hear anyone say this again. Ever.
- * Cheerleader, as in calling oneself a cheerleader for a project or goal at work. Second runner-up, with 87 votes. "Can't we leave high school behind us?" asks D.B.
- * Value proposition. Oy. "What is this exactly, and why does everything have to have one?" wonders Valerie. Tied for first runner-up with....

* One off. This is a comparatively new figure of speech frequently used to mean "privately," as in, "You and I will talk about this one off, after the meeting." It is also apparently why, according to many of you, nothing gets decided in meetings anymore.

Now for the winners, each nominated by more than 100 readers. May I have the envelopes, and a drum roll, please? The first 2005 Mallie award for Most Annoying Lingo goes to "new paradigm" (and its evil twin, "paradigm shift", also widely despised). Next, a big Mallie to the word "bandwidth," when it is used to refer to people. "Do we have to call hiring people adding bandwidth?" asks Lauren. Another reader, echoing the general consensus, called referring to human beings as bandwidth "appalling."

And last but not least—are you ready?—a tepid round of applause, please, for our final Mallie winner, and I'm sure you'll all agree this one is richly deserved: Any phrase—uttered by any businessperson at all, at any time, for any reason—that contains the word "vision."

Send questions to askannie@fortunemail.com

100 Words Every HIGH SCHOOL Graduate Should Know

I adapted this list from the American Heritage Dictionary list, available at:

<http://www.boe.ca.gov/leonard/info/100wordstoknow.htm>

“Between June of 2003 and January of 2004, the Leonard Letter featured a few of these words each week.

After the definitions were sentences applying the word to California politics or current events, often the

recall of Gray Davis and election of Arnold Schwarzenegger, which dominated the news during this time.”

Not all words are defined! You need to use the dictionary.

1. Abjure (v)—to render under oath; to repudiate; to give up (an action or practice): The California Legislature should abjure the habit of spending more money than the state collects in revenues.
2. Abrogate (v)—to abolish, do away with, or annul, especially by authority: The California Governor has abrogated his responsibility to pass a responsible budget.
3. Abstemious (adj)—sparingly used or consumed; restricted to bear necessities: Rather than raising taxes, the Legislature should consider passing an abstemious budget instead of expanding services, creating new programs and hiring more state workers.
4. Acumen (n)—quickness, accuracy, and keenness of judgment or insight. No one could accuse the California Legislature of handling the state’s budget with great acumen given its tardiness and inaccuracy.
5. Amorphous
6. Amortize
7. Apotheosis
8. Arcane
9. Auspicious (adj)—attended by favorable circumstances, marked by prosperity or success. If the Legislature would pass real workers’ comp reform and the Governor would reign in state overspending, California’s economy could be auspicious once again.
10. Belie (v)—to misrepresent; to contradict: Previous experience belies the Governor’s belief that tax increase will generate as much new revenue as he predicts.
11. Bellicose (adj)—warlike in manner; having or showing a disposition to fight: Senator Republican Leader Jim Brulte is bellicose in his opposition to tax increases.
12. Belligerent (adj)—Inclined or eager to fight; hostile or aggressive. Of, pertaining to, or engaged in warfare.
13. Benchmark (v)
14. Cabal
15. Canard
16. Chicanery (n)—deception by trickery or sophistry: The governor and legislature are being accused of chicanery for saying they are not raising the car tax because the increase is being implemented administratively.
17. Churlish (adj)—surly, difficult to work with, intractable: Those who want to raise taxes say that Senator Brulte is churlish; those who do not want to pay higher taxes appreciate his unwavering commitment.
18. Circumlocution (n.)— The use of unnecessarily wordy and indirect language. The Republican position on the budget has not been filled with circumlocution; they have been very clear and direct in their demand for no tax hikes.
19. Deleterious (adj.)— Having a harmful effect: The absence of a state budget will begin to have a deleterious effect on people who provides services to or receive services from the state soon.
20. Denouement

21. Detritus
22. Diffident (adj.) — Marked by a lack of self-confidence; shy, timid: Proponents of the Recall Governor Davis campaign are anything but diffident; in fact, their confidence and energy seems to grow daily.
23. Egregious
24. Enervate (tr.v.) – To weaken or destroy the strength or vitality of: To paraphrase Chief Justice Marshall – the power to tax is the power to enervate.
25. Enfranchise (tr.v.) — to endow with rights of citizenship, especially the right to vote: California voters have been enfranchised with the powers of initiative, referendum and recall, the latter of which they are now exercising with vigor.
26. Epiphany (n.pl.) — a sudden manifestation of the essence or meaning of something: A few Democrats have had epiphanies that high workers' comp rates and increasing unemployment insurance premiums are driving businesses out of the state.
27. Evanescent (adj.) — vanishing or likely to vanish like vapor: Budget agreements can be evanescent in Sacramento during June and July; believe nothing until it is voted but the Legislature, signed by the Governor, and delivered to be chaptered by the Secretary of State.
28. Expurgate (tr.v.) — to remove erroneous, vulgar, obscene, or otherwise objectionable material before publication: It will be impossible to expurgate the final budget to please everyone; even those who vote for it will find some parts of it objectionable.
29. Facetious (adj.) — given to wit and good humor; cleverly amusing in tone: Senator Ross Johnson's 'Red Ink Diaries' brought a facetious face to the many spending abuses in state government.
30. Fatuous (adj.) — vacuously, smugly and unconsciously foolish; delusive; unreal: The Democrats are subject to the fatuous thinking that tax increases will not further damage the state's economy.
31. Feasibility
32. Feckless (adj.) — lacking purpose or vitality; feeble or ineffective; careless and irresponsible: One of the reasons for the enthusiasm behind the Davis recall is the public's perception that he is a feckless leader.
33. Fecund
34. Feral
35. Fiduciary (adj.) — of or relating to a holding of something in trust for another: Elected officials have fiduciary responsibilities to the voters who entrust them with running the government efficiently.
36. Garrulous
37. Gauche (adj.) — lacking social polish; tactless: It may be gauche for the Democrat Party, which controls the executive and legislative branches, to claim the budget crisis is the fault of the Republican Party minority, but they are doing it anyway.
38. Gerrymander (tr.v.) — to divide a geographic area into voting districts so as to give unfair advantage to one party in elections: The 2000 redistricting process resulted in California having a new kind of gerrymander that resulted in groups of safe districts for each party.
39. Hegemony (n.pl.) — the predominant influence, as of a state, region or group, over others: The great out migration from California over the last decade has created a Democrat hegemony in California, mitigated only by the Constitutional requirement for a 2/3rd vote on tax increases and the budget.
40. Hubris (n.) — overbearing pride or presumption; arrogance: Voters find many politicians' hubris to be off-putting.
41. Hyperbole.
42. Ignominy
43. Impugn

44. Incontrovertible (adj.) — impossible to dispute: It is incontrovertible that California government is in serious financial trouble.
45. Inculcate (tr.v.) — To teach (others) by frequent instruction or repetition; indoctrinate: We should try to inculcate future political leaders with this basic tenant: if you spend more money than you take in, it is a recipe for disaster.
46. Infrastructure (n.) — An underlying base or foundation especially for an organization or system; the basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society, such as transportation and communications systems, water and power lines, and public institutions including schools, post offices, and prisons.
47. Inimitable
48. Insolvency
49. Intellectual property
50. Interpolate (v) — To insert or introduce between other elements or parts; in mathematics to estimate a value of (a function or series) between two known values: California's bureaucracy and regulations have grown so much that they now interpolate themselves into nearly every aspect of our daily lives.
51. Jeune (adj) — Not interesting; dull; lacking maturity; childish: The behavior of many political candidates is jeune for voters interested in serious solutions to serious problems.
52. Kinetic (adj.) 1. relating to the motion of material bodies and the forces associated therewith; 2. characterized by motion; 3. supplying motive force: Congressman Darrel Issa's large financial donation was the recall's kinetic kickstart.
53. Kowtow (intr. v.) To show servile deference: Gray Davis has been criticized for kowtowing to the leftist agenda of the Democrat Legislative Caucus.
54. Laissez faire (n.) An economic doctrine that opposes governmental regulation of or interference in commerce beyond the minimum necessary for a free-enterprise system to operate according to its own economic laws; Noninterference in the affairs of others: Most of California's economic problems stem from state government policies that place huge burdens on those who create jobs; to reverse that problem the pendulum must swing toward laissez faire policies.
55. Lexicon (n) dictionary: Last week's gubernatorial debate introduced at least one new word into California's political lexicon: Terminator.
56. Loquacious (adj) Very talkative; garrulous: I wonder, if Arianna Huffington does get a role in "Terminator 4" will she be even more loquacious than she was at the debate?
57. Lubricious
58. Lugubrious (adj) Mournful, dismal, or gloomy, especially to an exaggerated or ludicrous degree: Arianna Huffington and Cruz Bustamante accused Arnold Schwarzenegger of having a lugubrious outlook on the state's economy, but they are misled if they do not realize that our business climate is as dismal as he said.
59. Moiety (n) — A half, part, portion, or share: The philosophy of the welfare state is that the government can give a moiety to each resident by taking from those that produce more.
60. Moribund
61. Moxie (n)— The ability to face difficulty with spirit and courage. Aggressive energy; initiative: "His prose has moxie, though it rushes and stumbles from a pent-up surge" (Patricia Hampl).
62. Nihilism (n) — 1) Philosophy. a. An extreme form of skepticism that denies all existence; b. a doctrine holding that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated; 2) Rejection of all distinctions in moral or religious value and a willingness to repudiate all previous theories of morality or religious belief; 3) The belief that destruction of existing political or social institutions is necessary for future improvement: George Will's criticism of the recall crosses the line and wrongfully paints Californians as nihilistic for their

- having rejected the traditional means of representative government in their eagerness to fix what is wrong in the state.
63. Nonsectarian (adj) Not limited to or associated with a particular religious denomination: Arnold Schwarzenegger's transition team is politically nonsectarian, pulling from the left, right and center of California politics.
 64. Obsequious (adj) Full of or exhibiting servile compliance; fawning: Governor-elect Schwarzenegger has an advantage over other newly elected officials in that he is familiar with many people's obsequious behavior around famous, powerful people and, therefore, less likely to succumb to it.
 65. Oligarchy (n) — Government by a few, especially by a small faction of persons or families: I worry that term limits and the lack of competitive legislative districts has rendered our Legislature into a liberal oligarchy.
 66. Panache
 67. Parabola (n.) — A plane curve formed by the intersection of a right circular cone and a plane parallel to an element of the cone or by the locus of points equidistant from a fixed line and a fixed point not on the line: The new parabolic skis make it easier to execute quick turns, a talent that politicians have had for generations.
 68. Paradigm (n.) — A set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline: Arnold Schwarzenegger's election may well constitute a shifting paradigm for California voters who are tired of politics as usual.
 69. Parameter (n)— One of a set of measurable factors, such as temperature and pressure, that define a system and determine its behavior and are varied in an experiment; a factor that determines a range of variations; a boundary: In politics, as in science, it is necessary to define the parameters of the situation, but it will take some time before all of the variables that contribute to the Schwarzenegger administration are known let alone measurable.
 70. Pastiche
 71. Pecuniary (adj) — Of or relating to money: Governor-elect Schwarzenegger's biggest challenges are pecuniary, although the recent wildfires also present issues relating to forest management, environmental concerns and emergency resources.
 72. Penultimate
 73. Perdition
 74. Pernicious
 75. Precipitous (adj) — Resembling a precipice; extremely steep; a sharp drop: California's tax revenues are not in precipitous danger, but you could never tell this from the liberal drumbeat to raise tax rates.
 76. Profligate
 77. Puerile
 78. Putative
 79. Quotidian (adj) — Everyday; commonplace: Although last week's inaugural ceremony was low-key, it was anything but quotidian.
 80. Recapitulate (v) — To repeat in concise form: Governor Schwarzenegger will have to recapitulate his reform message to Democrat legislators many times.
 81. Reciprocal (adj) — Concerning each of two or more persons or things; interchanged, given, or owed to each other; performed, experienced, or felt by both sides; interchangeable; complementary: One of the reasons for Gray Davis's failure as Governor was the lack of reciprocal respect he showed to the legislature early on in his tenure when he announced that the legislature's purpose was to implement his will.
 82. Redolent
 83. Reparation (n) — The act or process of repairing or the condition of being repaired; the act or process of making amends, expiation; something done or paid to compensate or make

- amends: Governor Schwarzenegger was elected on a platform of making reparations for the recently imposed tripling of the car tax.
84. Sanguine (adj)— 1: confidently optimistic and cheerful 2: inclined to a healthy reddish color: Economic predictions have turned sanguine following news of greater productivity.
 85. Schema
 86. Simulacrum
 87. Strident
 88. Subjugate (v)— To bring under control: Governor Schwarzenegger is attempting to subjugate the legislature's desire to spend.
 89. Suffragist (n) — An advocate of the extension of political voting rights, especially to women: In 1911 California's male voters approved a statewide referendum on women's right to vote by a wide margin, making California the sixth state in the nation to approve women's suffrage.
 90. Supercilious (adj) — Feeling or showing haughty disdain: In rejecting the Governor's call for a spending cap, the legislature has demonstrated its supercilious attitude toward voters' demand for reform.
 91. Synergy
 92. Tautology (n) 1: (in logic) a vacuous statement composed of simpler statements in a fashion that makes it logically true whether the simpler statements are factually true or false; for example, the statement *Either it will rain tomorrow or it will not rain tomorrow*. 2: useless repetition; "to say that something is 'adequate enough' is a tautology": The Democrats engage in tautology when they argue that taxes are not high enough for the state budget's needs.
 93. Taxonomy (n) classification of organisms into groups based on similarities of structure or origin, etc.: A political taxonomy of California would show a shift away from the far-left and a growth in self-proclaimed nonpartisans.
 94. Tempestuous (adj) — Tumultuous; stormy: Governor Gray Davis' tempestuous relationship with the voters of California resulted in his recall.
 95. Unctuous (adj) — Characterized by affected, exaggerated, or insincere earnestness; of the nature or quality of an unguent or ointment; fatty; oily; greasy: Lt. Gov. Bustamante could not even manage an unctuous treatment of Governor Schwarzenegger at the State of the State; he treated the Governor with a critical and ungracious manner.
 96. Usurp (v) — To seize and hold (the power or rights of another, for example) by force and without legal authority: Some legislators believe the Governor usurped their authority in his executive order backfill the car tax revenues to local governments.
 97. Vacuous (adj) — Devoid of matter; empty; lacking intelligence; stupid; devoid of substance or meaning; inane: Californians are anticipating a budget debate that is serious and substantive, not vacuous discussions of pat positions with no attempts to find common ground.
 98. Vehement (adj) — Characterized by forcefulness of expression or intensity of emotion or conviction: Governor Schwarzenegger is vehement that California government needs to be seriously reformed if our economy is to prosper.
 99. Winnow (v) — To examine closely in order to separate the good from the bad; sift: The budget process should be a winnowing process of determining what programs the state can afford and what programs cannot be a priority at this time.
 100. Xenophobe (n) — A person unduly fearful or contemptuous of that which is foreign, especially of strangers or foreign peoples: Many Californians are concerned about the economic consequences of illegal immigration, but others are just xenophobic.