

## from . . . to

“From soup to nuts” makes sense because soup was the traditional first course in a formal meal, nuts the last. Similarly “from A to Z” makes sense because these are the first and last letters of the alphabet. But this construction is often improperly used when no such extremes are being identified, as in “He gave his daughter everything from a bicycle to lawn darts to a teddy bear.” A range can’t have more than two extremes. “He gave his daughter everything from paper dolls to a Cadillac” conveys the notion of a spectrum from very cheap to very expensive and is fine. Often when people are tempted to use “from. . . to” they would be better off using a different expression, as, for example, in this sentence: “She tried all sorts of medicines, including penicillin and sulfa drugs.”

July  
**1/2**  
2006  
Saturday/Sunday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23/30	24/31	25	26	27	28	29

## regretfully/regrettably

Either word can be used as an adverb to introduce an expression of regret, though conservatives prefer “regrettably” in sentences like “Regrettably, it rained on the 4th of July.” Within the body of a sentence, however, “regretfully” may be used only to describe the manner in which someone does something: “John had to regretfully decline his beloved’s invitation to go hang-gliding because he was terrified of heights.” If no specified person in the sentence is doing the regretting, but the speaker is simply asserting “it is to be regretted,” the word is “regrettably”: “Their boss is regrettably stubborn.”

July							
3	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
<hr/>							1
2006	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Monday	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	23/30	24/31	25	26	27	28	29

## John Henry/John Hancock

John Hancock signed the Declaration of Independence so flamboyantly that his name became a synonym for “signature.” Don’t mix him up with John Henry, who was a steel-drivin’ man.

Independence Day

July  
4

2006  
Tuesday



*John Hancock was a pen-drivin’ man.*

## offense/offence

In the U.S. “offense” is standard; in the U.K. use “offence.” The sports pronunciation accenting the first syllable should not be used when discussing military, legal, or other sorts of offense.

July  
5



2006

Wednesday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## quiet/quite

This is probably caused by a slip of the fingers more often than by a slip of the mental gears, but one often sees “quite” (very) substituted for “quiet” (shhh!). This is one of those common errors your spelling checker will not catch, so look out for it.

July  
6



2006

Thursday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## sci-fi/science fiction/SF

“Sci-fi,” the widely used abbreviation for “science fiction,” is objectionable to most professional science fiction writers and scholars, and to many fans. Some of them scornfully designate alien monster movies and other trivial entertainments “sci-fi” (which they pronounce “skiffy”) to distinguish them from true science fiction. The preferred abbreviation in these circles is “SF.” The problem with this abbreviation is that to the general public “SF” means “San Francisco.” “The Sci-Fi Channel” has exacerbated the conflict over this term. If you are a reporter approaching a science fiction writer or expert you immediately mark yourself as an outsider by using the term “sci-fi.”

July

7



2006

Friday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23/30	24/31	25	26	27	28	29

## upmost/utmost

The word is “utmost” and is related to words like “utter,” as in “The birthday party was utter chaos.” “Upmost” may seem logical, but it’s a sure sign of a person who knows spoken English better than written English.

July  
**8/9**  
—  
2006  
Saturday/Sunday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## wreckless/reckless

This word has nothing to do with creating the potential for a wreck. Rather it involves not reckoning carefully all the hazards involved in an action. The correct spelling is therefore “reckless.”

July  
10  
2006  
Monday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

**tie me over/tide me over**

That little something that enables you to get through the dry spell between tides (or any other periods of plenty), *tides* you over.

July  
**11**  
  
2006  
Tuesday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## group (plural vs. singular)

When the group is being considered as a whole, it can be treated as a single entity: “The group was ready to go on stage.” But when the individuality of its members is being emphasized, “group” is plural: “The group were in disagreement about where to go for dinner.”

July  
12  

---

2006  
Wednesday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## reticent/hesitant

“Reticent” most often means “reluctant to speak.” It can also mean “reserved” or “restrained,” though conservatives prefer to use it to apply only to speech. If you’re feeling nervous about *doing* something, you’re hesitant: “I’m hesitant about trying to ride a unicycle in public.” “Hesitant” is by far the more common word; so if you hesitate to choose between the two, go with “hesitant.”

July  
13



2006

Thursday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## beaurocracy/bureaucracy

The French *bureaucrats* from whom we get this word worked at their *bureaus* (desks, spelled *bureaux* in French) in what came to be known as *bureaucracies*.

July  
14  
2006  
Friday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## bring/take

When you are viewing the movement of something from the point of arrival, use “bring.” “When you come to the potluck, please bring a green salad.” Viewing things from the point of departure, you should use “take”: “When you go to the potluck, take a bottle of wine.”

July  
15/16




2006

Saturday/Sunday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29


## artic/arctic

Although some brand names have incorporated this popular error, remember that the Arctic Circle is an arc. By the way, Ralph Vaughan Williams called his suite drawn from the score of the film *Scott of the Antarctic* the *Sinfonia Antartica*, but that's Italian, not English.

July							
17	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
							1
2006	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Monday	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## farther/further

Some authorities (like the Associated Press) insist on “farther” to refer to physical distance and on “further” to refer to an extent of time or degree, but others treat the two words as interchangeable except for insisting on “further” for “in addition” or “moreover.” You’ll always be safe in making the distinction; some people get really testy about this.

July	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
18							1
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2006	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Tuesday	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

**presently/currently**

Some argue that “presently” doesn’t mean “in the present.” It means “soon.” If you want to talk about something that’s happening right now, they urge you to say it’s going on “currently.”



July  
19



2006  
Wednesday

*For a moment he was confused—  
was he being attacked by a bear  
presently or currently?*

**return back/return**

“Return back” is a redundancy. Use just “return,” unless you mean to say instead “turn back.”

July  
20



2006

Thursday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## supercede/supersede

“Supersede,” meaning “to replace,” originally meant “to sit higher” than, from Latin *sedere*, “to sit.” In the 18th century, rich people were often carried about as they sat in sedan chairs. Don’t be misled by the fact that this word rhymes with words having quite different roots, such as “intercede.”

July  
21



2006

Friday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

**without further adieu/without further ado**

This familiar cliché introducing speakers and performing acts has nothing to do with saying *adieu* (goodbye) to them. It means “without further blather, fuss, or to-do.” The last word is “ado.”

July  
22/23



2006

Saturday/Sunday

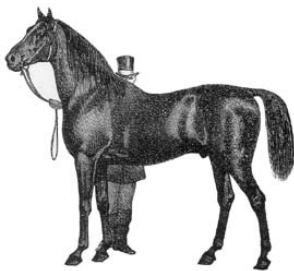
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

**chomp at the bit/champ at the bit**

“Champ at the bit” is the only common use of this old word meaning “gnash,” and it conjures up a restless horse chewing on its bit, eager to get underway. Its unfamiliarity makes some people mistakenly substitute the slangy “chomp.”

July  
24

2006  
Monday



*For more than one reason,  
they called him “Champ.”*

## **apropos/appropriate**

“Apropos” (anglicized from the French phrase *à propos*) means relevant, connected with what has gone before; it should not be used as an all-purpose substitute for “appropriate.” It would be inappropriate, for example, to say, “Your tuxedo was perfectly apropos for the opera gala.”

July  
**25**  
—  
2006  
Tuesday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## verses/versus

The “vs.” in a law case like “Brown vs. The Board of Education” stands for Latin *versus* (meaning “against”). Don’t confuse it with the word for lines of poetry—“verses”—when describing other conflicts, like the upcoming football game featuring Oakesdale versus Pinewood.

July  
26  
—  
2006  
Wednesday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## religion

Protestants often refer incorrectly to “the Catholic religion.” Catholicism is a faith or a church. (Only Protestants belong to “denominations.”) Both Catholics and Protestants follow the Christian religion.

July  
27



2006

Thursday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## premise/premises

Some people suppose that since “premises” has a plural form, a single house or other piece of property must be a “premise,” but that word is reserved for use as a term in logic meaning something assumed or taken as given in making an argument. Your lowly one-room shack is still your “premises.”

July  
28



2006

Friday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

## old-timer's disease/Alzheimer's disease

I've always thought that "old-timer's disease" was a clever if tasteless pun on "Alzheimer's disease," but many people have assured me that this is a common and quite unintentional error.

July  
29/30




2006

Saturday/Sunday

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<sup>23</sup> / <sub>30</sub>	<sup>24</sup> / <sub>31</sub>	25	26	27	28	29

**Sierra Nevada Mountains/Sierra Nevadas**  
*Sierra* is Spanish for “mountain range,” so knowledgeable Westerners usually avoid a redundancy by simply referring to “the Sierra Nevadas” or simply “the Sierras.” Transplanted weather forecasters often get this wrong.

Some object to the familiar abbreviation “Sierras,” but this form, like “Rockies” and “Smokies,” is too well established to be considered erroneous.

July	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
31							1
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2006	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Monday	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	23/30	24/31	25	26	27	28	29