

**vintage point/vantage point**

The spot from which you have a  
good view is a vantage point.

New Year's Day

**January**

**1**

© 2008

2008

**TUESDAY**



*Here's hoping for a vintage year.*

## slog it out/slug it out

Slogging is a slow, messy business, typically tramping through sticky mud or metaphorically struggling with other difficult tasks. You might slog through a pile of receipts to do your taxes; If you are engaged in a fierce battle with an adversary, however, you slug it out, like boxers slugging each other. There is no such expression as “slog it out.”

January

2

\*\*\*\*\*

2008

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	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## **lense/lens**

Although the variant spelling “lense” is listed in some dictionaries, the standard spelling for those little disks that focus light is “lens.”

**January**

**3**

\*\*\*

2008

**THURSDAY**

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

## patience/patients

Doctors have patients, but while you're waiting to see them you have to have patience.



January

4

© 2008

2008

FRIDAY

*The most popular pediatrician in town, Dr. Holcroft was a man with admirable patients.*

## alleged, allegedly

Seeking to avoid prejudging the facts in a crime and protect the rights of the accused, reporters sometimes over-use “alleged” and “allegedly.” If it is clear that someone has been robbed at gunpoint, it’s not necessary to describe it as an alleged robbery nor the victim as an alleged victim. This practice insultingly casts doubt on the honesty of the victim and protects no one. An accused perpetrator is one whose guilt is not yet established, so it is redundant to speak of an “alleged accused.” If the perpetrator has not yet been identified, it’s pointless to speak of the search for an “alleged perpetrator.”

January

5/6

\*\*\*\*\*

2008

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	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

**on accident/by accident**

Although you can do things *on*  
purpose, you do them *by* accident.

January

7

\*\*\*\*\*

2008

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	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## minature/miniature

Few people pronounce the second syllable in “miniature” distinctly, so it often gets dropped in spelling.

January

8

\*\*\*\*\*

2008

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	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## one-dimensional/two-dimensional

Once upon a time most folks knew that “three-dimensional” characters or ideas were rounded, fleshed out, and complex and “two-dimensional” ones were flat and uninteresting. It seems that the knowledge of basic geometry has declined in recent years, because today we hear uninteresting characters and ideas described as “one-dimensional.” According to Euclid, no object can be one-dimensional (of course, according to modern physics, even two-dimensionality is only an abstract concept). If you are still bothered by the notion that two dimensions are one too many, just use “flat.”



*Swashbuckling Captain Bogg—  
definitely not a one-dimensional  
character.*

January

9

© 2008

2008

WEDNESDAY

## often

People striving for sophistication often pronounce the “T” in this word, but true sophisticates know that the masses are correct in saying “often.”

January

10

\*\*\*\*\*

2008

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	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## premier/premiere

These words are, respectively, the masculine and feminine forms of the word for “first” in French; but they have become differentiated in English. Only the masculine form is used as an adjective, as in “Tidy-Pool is the premier pool-cleaning firm in Orange County.” The confusion arises when these words are used as nouns. The prime minister of a parliamentary government is known as a “premier.” The opening night of a film or play is its “premiere.”

“Premiere” as a verb is common in the arts and in show business (“The show premiered on PBS”), but it is less acceptable in other contexts (“The state government premiered its new welfare system”). Use “introduced” or, if real innovation is involved, “pioneered.”

January

11

THE CALENDAR

2008

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	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## role/roll

An actor plays a role. Bill Gates is the entrepreneur's role model. But you eat a sausage on a roll and roll out the barrel.

January  
**12/13**

© 2008

2008

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	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## sacred/scared

This is one of those silly typos which your spelling checker won't catch: gods are sacred, the damned in Hell are scared.



January

14

© 2008

2008

MONDAY

*Joyce the angel in full-speed descent—it's a fine line between sacred and scary.*

## **grievous/grievous**

There are just two syllables in “grievous,”  
and it’s pronounced “GRIEVE-us.”

January

15

\*\*\*\*\*

2008

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	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## suped up/souped up

The car you've souped up may be super, but it's not "suped up."

January  
**16**

© 2008

2008

WEDNESDAY



*Souped-up soup. It's superb!*

## eponymous/self-titled

It has become popular among certain critics to call recordings named after their performing artists “eponymous.” Thus the album by the Beatles titled *The Beatles* would be an eponymous album. (Don’t remember it? It’s the one most people call *The White Album*; the title was embossed on the cover rather than printed on it.) This pretentious term is not only so obscure as to be almost useless, these writers are not using it in its original sense; it was the person who was eponymous, not the thing named after the person. I prefer the usage of critics who call such recordings “self-titled.” It’s an awkward phrase, but at least it’s easy for the reader to figure out what is meant.

January

17

\*\*\*

2008

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	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## carrot on a stick/the carrot or the stick

Authoritative dictionaries agree—the expression refers to offering to reward a stubborn mule or donkey with a carrot or threatening to beat it with a stick and not to a carrot being dangled from a stick. For me, the clincher is that no one actually cites the form of the “original expression.” In what imaginable context would it possibly be witty or memorable to say that someone or something had been motivated by a carrot on a stick? Why not an apple on a stick, or a bag of oats? Boring, right? Not something likely to pass into popular usage. This saying belongs to the same general family as “You can draw more flies with honey than with vinegar.” It is never used except when such contrast is implied.

January

18

ESTABLISHED 1857

2008

FRIDAY



*Horace hated vegetables; he thought  
carrots tasted like sticks.*

## plug-in/outlet

That thing on the end of an electrical cord is a plug, which goes into the socket of the wall outlet.

January  
**19/20**

© 2008

2008

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	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## lighted/lit

Don't fret over the difference between these two words; they're interchangeable.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

January

21

\*\*\*\*\*

2008

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	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## for sale/on sale

If you're selling something, it's *for* sale;  
but if you lower the price, it goes *on* sale.

January  
**22**

\*\*\*

2008  
TUESDAY



*“When I saw this hat for sale, I knew I  
couldn’t wait for it to go on sale.”*

**ever so often/every so often**

When something happens once in a while, it happens *every* so often.

January

23

—MARGARET FULLER—

2008

WEDNESDAY

“The Visiting Committee, with his gold neck shrouded in cambric, appeared in the schoolroom doorway about once in every so often.”

—Margaret Fuller,  
*A New England Childhood*

## leave/let

The colloquial use of “leave” to mean “let” in phrases like “leave me be” is not standard. “Leave me alone” is fine, though.

January

24

© 2008

2008

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	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## not all

The combination of “not” and “all” can be confusing if you’re not careful about placement. “All politicians are not corrupt” could theoretically mean that no politician is corrupt; but what you probably mean to say is “Not all politicians are corrupt.” When “not all” is a minority, it’s sometimes better to replace “not all” with “some.” “The widescreen version is not available in all video stores” can be made clearer by saying “The widescreen version is not available in some stores.”

January

25

FRIDAY

2008

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	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## hero/protagonist

In ordinary usage “hero” has two meanings: “leading character in a story” and “brave, admirable person.” In simple tales the two meanings may work together, but in modern literature and film the leading character or “protagonist” (a technical term common in literary criticism) may behave in a very unheroic fashion. Students who express shock that the “hero” of a play or novel behaves despicably reveal their inexperience. In literature classes avoid the word unless you mean to stress a character’s heroic qualities. However, if you are discussing the main character in a traditional opera, where values are often simple, you may get by with referring to the male lead as the “hero”—but is Don Giovanni really a *hero*?

January  
**26/27**

© 2008

2008

SATURDAY/SUNDAY



*Mozart, hero to  
many a composer.*

## influential/influential

If you have influence, you are  
“influential,” not “influential.”

January

28

\*\*\*\*\*

2008

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	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## croissant

The fanciful legend which attributes the creation of the croissant to Christian bakers celebrating a 17th-century victory over the Turks is widely recounted but almost certainly untrue, since there is no trace of the pastry until a century later. Although its form was probably not influenced by the Islamic crescent, the word *croissant* most definitely is French for “crescent.” Pastries formed from the same dough into different shapes should not be called “croissants.” If a customer in your bakery asks for a *pain au chocolat* (PAN oh-show-co-LA), reach for that rectangular pastry usually mislabeled in the U.S. a “chocolate croissant.”

January

29

© 2008

2008

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	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## span/spun

Don't say "the demon span her head around."  
The past tense of "spin" in this sense is *spun*.

January

30

© 2008

2008

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	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

everytime/every time

“Every time” is always two separate words.



January

31

© 2008

2008

THURSDAY

*“And so you see, class, ‘every time’ is correct every time!”*