



New and Revolutionary! Fifteen of the Most Overused Words of 2012

Every year, some words are more popular than others. As fashionable words get bandied about with abandon, you will find some of them begin to grate on you. The more they are seen and heard, the less meaning they retain. You can only read that something is “cutting-edge” so often before nothing will ever seem cutting-edge again. And how many times can you hear the phrase “best practices” before you automatically tune out any advice that follows?

We have written about the damage that overused words and jargon can do to your writing’s effectiveness. At best they simply take up space without adding any substance, and at worst they turn readers away who are tired to death of hearing them. Do not take unnecessary hits to your credibility. Start your list of words to avoid now.

PR Words:

Press releases have to be somewhat formulaic. Newswires have standards and requirements, and you have specific information that you need to share. But that doesn’t mean you have to use the same words everyone else does. The top five offenders include:

- Authentic
- Innovative
- Next Generation
- Creative
- Unique

For a more extensive list, PRNews put together the 25 most overused words in press releases based on observations from its staff.

Marketing words:

Marketers love to use buzzwords. The pervasiveness of fluff in marketing literature takes away from good, substantive advice. Banned marketing words include:

- Strategy
- Empower
- Influencer
- Leverage
- Best Practice





Forbes did a fun jargon madness game last year that encouraged users to vote on their least favorite words and phrases. “Drinking the Kool-Aid” edged out “leverage” for the win. Hubspot also has a more comprehensive list.

Tech words:

The tech writing community can be quite clever, creating new words when nothing that already exists will suffice. But sometimes even the most resourceful people get stuck on too much of a good thing. Like these words:

Ecosystem
Metrics
Engagement
YOLO
Curate

The Atlantic has some humorous comments about the words ecosystem, curate and YOLO. Rebecca Greenfield said of ecosystem, “This reasonable science-related word has been co-opted by the tech writing community, which has senselessly ravaged it.” For more withering critiques, read the whole article here.

What words are most irritating to you? Ask your colleagues and add your own. Create a banned words list for your office. If you catch yourself using any of them, bring out the thesaurus. Your readers will thank you.

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