

## Wordsworth's Newsletter

### Words of Wisdom from The Words Workshop



#### Wordsworth says ... English is complicated.

The English language is complicated, there is no doubt about it. Words aren't always spelt the way they sound, some sound the same but have different meanings, and don't even get us started on grammar. As well as the familiar verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs are we all sure how to use subjunctives? Would we be able to spot a conjunction if we stumbled upon it? And, do we all know that a preposition is not a good word to end a sentence with? Is it little wonder that teenagers today zone out and take little interest in the technicalities of the English language?

And for those learning English as a second language it must be almost impossible. Imagine trying to learn the English language and being faced with the sentences below:

1. The farm was used to produce produce.
2. The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
3. They were too close to the door to close it.
4. The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
5. Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
6. I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.

Another thing that does not appear to make any sense is the spelling of singulars and plurals. If the plural of foot is feet, how come the plural of booth is booths? Here are a few more examples:

1. One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese, yet the plural of moose should never be "meese".
2. You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice; yet the plural of house is houses, not "hice".
3. The plural of box is boxes; but the plural of ox is oxen not "oxes".



And then there is just the plain strange:

1. A man's nose can run and his feet can smell.
2. It is called 'shipping' when something is sent by truck and 'sending cargo' when sent by ship?

With all this information, we cannot blame people who unintentionally make a mistake, stammering in the middle of a sentence or splitting their infinitives. The question is how can we effectively engage people who have little interest or have not yet realised the importance of learning the ins and outs of the English language?

It is easy, for those of us in the know, to sit on our high horses and pass judgement on those who appear to misunderstand our language. All we ask is that people try their best. As author Phillip Gooden said in *The Guinness Guide to Better English*:

"If the notion that good English can only be correct English is a little daunting, we can attempt another definition: good English ... is language used with clarity, used effectively; a language that achieves the results a writer or speaker desires; and (where appropriate) a language deployed with polish and style."

#### Wordsworth's jargon buster ...

Some of you old-timers may remember 'Wordsworth's management speak to avoid' where Wordsworth tried to de-code management jargon into plain English. Well, we thought the parents, aunties, uncles, grandmas and grandpas out there might appreciate a little teenage jargon busting.

This month's word is:

**'Bare'**

Some of you may be thinking that this is not jargon at all, and in some instances you would be right. However, many teenagers don't use this to describe something as naked, for example: "The trees are bare in autumn." No, no. For some bare, quite ironically, means 'a lot' or 'many'. So teen folk might say, "I've got bare homework to do." Or "He's got bare skills." We know ... weird.

Wordsworth will be bringing you more like this over the next few months, however if you want to swot up go to [www.gotateenager.org.uk](http://www.gotateenager.org.uk) for more teenage jargon busting.

