Truthiness Voted 2005 Word of the Year by American Dialect Society

In its 16th annual words of the year vote, the American Dialect Society voted truthiness as the word of the year. Recently popularized on the Colbert Report, a satirical mock news show on the Comedy Central television channel, truthiness refers to the quality of preferring concepts or facts one wishes to be true, rather than concepts or facts known to be true. As Stephen Colbert put it, “I don't trust books. They're all fact, no heart.” Other meanings of the word date as far back as 1824.

Word of the Year is interpreted in its broader sense as “vocabulary item”—not just words but phrases. The words or phrases do not have to be brand new, but they have to be newly prominent or notable in the past year, in the manner of Time magazine’s Person of the Year. The election is serious, based on members’ expertise in the study of words, but it is far from solemn.

Presiding at the Jan. 6 nominating session was Professor Wayne Glowka of Georgia College and State University, chair of the New Words Committee of the American Dialect Society. He conducts the column “Among the New Words” in the society’s quarterly journal American Speech.

The number after each nomination is the number of votes it received. Voting totals are not identical because the number of voters changed for each category.

**Word of the Year**

**WINNER truthiness**: the quality of stating concepts or facts one wishes or believes to be true, rather than concepts or facts known to be true. First vote: 32. Run-off: 66

**Katrina**: all Katrina-related words. First vote: 36. Run-off: 22

**podcast**: a digital feed containing audio or video files for downloading to a portable MP3 player. From the brand name MP3 player iPod + broadcast. 2

**intelligent design**: the theory that life is could only have been created by a sentient being.
Often acronymized and pronounced as ID, the theory is being pushed by proponents of creation science as a necessary part of school curricula alongside explanations of evolution. 5

**refugee:** a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. 2

**Cruiselex:** Cruiselex is not itself a nominated word, but the term refers collectively to all the other Tom-Cruise-related words of the year in the special category below. 0

**Heck of a job:** catch phrase coined by President Bush. 5

**brown-out:** the poor handling of an emergency. 1

**disaster industrial complex:** the array of businesses which make profit from by providing emergency services, especially those that result from no-bid government contracts. 3

**Most Useful**

**WINNER podcast:** a digital feed containing audio or video files for downloading to a portable MP3 player. From the brand name MP3 player iPod + broadcast. 49

**lifehack:** to make one’s day-to-day behaviors or activities more efficient. Also as a noun. Lifehacks apply the make-do, can-do, what-will-it-do attitude that originated in computer hacking. 4

**truthiness:** the quality of stating concepts or facts one wishes or believes to be true, rather than concepts or facts known to be true. Stephen Colbert: “I don't trust books. They're all fact, no heart.” 25

**patent troll:** a person or business, especially a lawyer, who applies for or owns a patent with no intention of developing the product but with every intention of launching lawsuits against patent infringers. 12

**Most Creative**

**WINNER whale tail:** the appearance of thong or g-string underwear above the waistband of pants, shorts, or a skirt. Also known as a longhorn. First vote: 44. Run-off: 56

**pinosaur:** a very old Wollemi pine tree near Australia’s Blue Mountain. 6

**muffin top:** the bulge of flesh hanging over the top of low-rider jeans. 25

**flee-ancée:** runaway bride Jennifer Wilbanks. First vote: 15. Run-off: 38

**Most Unnecessary**

**WINNER K Fed:** Kevin Federline, Mr. Britney Spears. 48

**man date:** when two heterosexual men engage in an activity together without romantic implications. 10

**pope-squatting:** registering a domain name that is the same of a new pope before the pope chooses his new name in order to profit from it. 2

**reverse logistics:** a process by which you de-supply a warehouse or distribute stored merchandise. 34

**Most Outrageous**
WINNER crotchfruit: a child; children. Perhaps inspired by the expression the fruit of one’s loins, this term began among proponents of child-free public spaces, but has since spread to parents who use it jocularly. 56

Whizzinator: a trademarked urinating device using a realistic prosthetic penis and synthetic urine in order to pass a drug test. 10

Bumper Nutz: fake testicles hung from the rear end of a vehicle. 8

Ex-Lax option: nuclear option; immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq. 0

intelligent design n. the theory that life is could only have been created by a sentient being. Often acronymized and pronounced as ID, the theory is being pushed by proponents of creation science as a necessary part of school curricula alongside explanations of evolution. 22

Most Euphemistic
WINNER internal nutrition: force-feeding a prisoner against his or her will. First vote: 33. Run-off: 51


holiday tree: a Christmas tree. 6

extraordinary rendition: the surrendering of a suspect or detainee to another jurisdiction, especially overseas. 12

man date: when two heterosexual men engage in an activity together without romantic implications. 0

Best Tom-Cruise-Related Word: Cruiselex
WINNER jump the couch: to exhibit strange or frenetic behavior. Inspired by the couch-bouncing antics of Tom Cruise on Oprah Winfrey’s talk show in May. It derives from an earlier term, jump the shark, meaning to (irretrievably) diminish in quality; to outlast public interest or popular support. 69

TomKat: the celebrity couple of Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes. 1

Cruisazy: crazy in the manner of Tom Cruise. 5

Most Likely to Succeed
WINNER sudoku: a number puzzle in which numbers 1 through 9 must be placed into a grid of cells so that each row or column contains only one of each. The current craze started in Japan, caught on in the U.K. in 2004, and then exploded in the U.S. in 2005. 23, 43

podcast: a digital feed containing audio or video files for downloading to a portable MP3 player. From the brand name MP3 player iPod + broadcast. 31, 33

Cyber Monday: the Monday after Thanksgiving, purported to be the day that most online shopping takes place. 10

folksonomy: a taxonomy created by an ad hoc group of non-experts. From folk + ta(x)onomy. 11
Least Likely to Succeed

**WINNER pope-squatting**: registering a domain name that is the same of a new pope before the pope chooses his new name in order to profit from it. 55

**metrospiritual**: an un_specific, cosmopolitan, and expansive view of spirituality. Inspired by metrosexual. 9

**Cruiselex**: Cruiselex is not itself a nominated word, but the term refers collectively to all the other Tom-Cruise-related words of the year in the category above. 9

**Brangelina**: the celebrity couple Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. 6

**GSAVE**: Global Struggle Against Violent Extremism. 14

Founded in 1889, the American Dialect Society is dedicated to the study of the English language in North America, and of other languages, or dialects of other languages, influencing it or influenced by it. ADS members are linguists, lexicographers, etymologists, historians, grammarians, academics, editors, writers, and independent scholars in the fields of English, foreign languages, and other disciplines. The society also publishes the quarterly journal American Speech.

The American Dialect Society began choosing Words of the Year in 1990. Winners are listed below. A full account of the previous choices may be found on the American Dialect Society’s website, www.americandialect.org.

Not all words chosen for a particular year are destined to become permanent additions to the vocabulary. Y2K in 1999 and chad in 2000 are examples of prominent terms that faded quickly. An explanation of which words are likely to succeed may be found in Predicting New Words: The Secrets of Their Success by Allan Metcalf, published in 2002 by Houghton Mifflin.

**American Dialect Society: Words of Previous Years**


2002 Word of the Year: **weapons of mass destruction** or **WMD**, sought for in Iraq. Most Likely to Succeed: **blog**, from “weblog,” a website of personal events, comments, and links. Most Useful: **google** (verb), as in “to google someone,” to search the Web using the search engine Google for information on a person or thing. Most Creative: **Iraqnophobia**, strong fear of

2001 Word of the Year: 9-11, 9/11 or September 11, terrorist attacks on that date. Most Likely to Succeed: 9-11. Most Useful (tie): facial profiling, using video “faceprints” to identify terrorists and criminals, and second-hand speech, cell phone conversations heard by others in public places. Most Creative: shuicide bomber, terrorist with bomb in shoes. Most Unnecessary: impeachment nostalgia, longing for the superficial news of the Clinton era. Least Likely to Succeed: Osamaniac, woman sexually attracted to terrorist Osama bin Laden. Most Outrageous: assoline, methane used as fuel. Most Euphemistic: daisy cutter, large bomb that explodes a few feet above the ground. Most Inspirational: Let’s roll! words of Todd Beamer to start the attack that foiled the hijackers of United Flight 93 on September 11.

2000 Word of the Year: chad, a small scrap of paper punched from a voting card. Most Likely to Succeed: muggle, Harry Potter term for a non-wizard; a mundane, unimaginative person. Most Useful: civil union, legal same-sex marriage. Most Creative: dot bomb, a failed dot-com. Most Unnecessary: sudden loss of wealth syndrome. Least Likely to Succeed: kablokeys, used in phrases like “It scared the kablokeys out of me.” Most Outrageous: wall humping, rubbing a thigh against a security card scanner to allow access without removing the card from one's pocket. Most Euphemistic: courtesy call, an uninvited call from a telemarketer. Brand New (coined during the year, not previously attested): unconcede, to rescind a concession as presidential candidate Al Gore did on election night. (It was later discovered that candidate Bob Dole had unconceded the presidential election in 1996, and there were occasional instances of that word going back several centuries.)


1998 Word of the Year: prefix e- for “electronic” as in e-mail and newly prominent e-commerce. Most Likely to Succeed and Most Useful: e-. Most Original: multislacking, playing at the computer when one should be working. Most Unnecessary: the entire Monica Lewinsky word family, including Big She as a synonym for M.L., and the verb Lewinsky, to engage in what might be sexual relations. Least Likely to Succeed: compfusion, confusion over computers. Most Outrageous: Ejaculation Proclamation, the President’s confession. Most Euphemistic: senior moment, momentary lapse of memory due to age. Brand New (coined during the year, not previously attested): -agra or -gra (from the drug name Viagra), suffix denoting substance prompting men to perform unusually, as in Directra that causes men to ask for directions.

1997 Word of the Year: millennium bug, also known as Y2K bug or Y2K problem, that causes computers to think that the year after 1999 is 1900. Most Likely to Succeed: DVD, Digital Versatile Disk, optical disk expected to replace CDs. Most Useful: (tie) -[r]azzi, an aggressive pursuer, and duh (with a falling intonation), expression of someone else’s stupidity. Most Original: prairie dogging, popping one’s head above an office cubicle for the sake of curiosity. Most Unnecessary: heaven-o, replacement for “hello.” Most Outrageous: Florida flambe, fire caused by Florida electric chair. Most Euphemistic: exit bag, bag placed over the head to assist in
suicide. Brand New (coined during the year, not previously attested): El Nonsense, illogical association of an event with El Niño.

1996 Word of the Year: mom as in soccer mom, newly significant type of voter. Most Likely to Succeed: drive-by, designating brief visits or hospital stays. Most Useful: dot, used instead of “period” in e-mail and URL addresses. Most Original: prebuttal, preemptive rebuttal. Most Unnecessary: Mexican hustle, another name for the Macarena (which is not Mexican). Most Outrageous: toy soldier, land mine. Most Euphemistic: (tie) urban camping, living homeless in a city, and food insecure, said of a country where people are starving. Most Controversial: Ebonics, African-American vernacular English.

1995 Word of the Year: (tie) World Wide Web on the Internet, and newt, to make aggressive changes as a newcomer. Most Likely to Succeed: World Wide Web and its variants the Web, WWW, W3. Most Useful: E.Q. (for Emotional Quotient), the ability to manage one’s emotions. Most Original: postal or go postal, to act irrationally, often violently, from stress at work. Most Unnecessary: Vanna White shrimp, large shrimp for the restaurant market. Most Outrageous: starter marriage, a first marriage not expected to be the last. Most Euphemistic: patriot, one who believes in using force of arms if necessary to defend individual rights against the government.

1994 Word of the Year: (tie) cyber, pertaining to computers and electronic communication, and morph, to change form. Most Promising: Infobahn, the Internet. Most Useful: g Gingrich, to deal with government agencies, policies, and people in the manner of U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Most Imaginative: guillermo, an e-mail message in a foreign language. (The Spanish name Guillermo has the nickname Memo.) Most Trendy: dress down day or casual day, a workday when employees are allowed to dress casually. Most Euphemistic: challenged indicating an undesirable or unappealing condition. Most Beautiful: sylvanshine, night-time iridescence of certain forest trees.


1992 Word of the Year: Not! expression of disagreement. Most Likely to Succeed: snail mail, s-mail, mail that is physically delivered, as opposed to e-mail. Most Useful: grunge, a style of clothing. Most Original: Franken-, genetically altered. Most Amazing: Munchhausen’s syndrome by proxy, illness fabricated to evoke sympathy for the caregiver. Most Unnecessary: gender feminism, belief that sex roles are social, not biological. Most Outrageous: ethnic cleansing, purging of ethnic minorities.

1991 Word of the Year: mother of all —, greatest, most impressive. Most Likely to Succeed: rollerblade, skate with rollers in a single row. Most Successful: in your face, aggressive, confrontational, flamboyant. Most Original: molecular pharming, pharming, genetically modifying farm animals to produce human proteins for pharmaceutical use. Most Amazing: velcroid, a person who sticks by the (U.S.) president, especially for photo opportunities. Most Unnecessary: massively parallel, many small computers yoked together.

1990 Word of the Year: bushlips, insincere political rhetoric. Most Likely to Succeed: (tie) notebook PC, a portable personal computer weighting 4-8 pounds, and rightsizing, adjusting
the size of a staff by laying off employees. Most Useful: (tie) *technostupidity*, loss of ability through dependence on machines, and *potty parity*, equalization of toilet facilities for the sexes. Most Original: *voice merging*, the oral tradition of African-American preachers using another’s words. Most Amazing: *bungee jumping*, jumping from a high platform with elastic cables on the feet. Most Unnecessary: *peace dividend*, anticipated saving in military spending due to improved relations with the Soviet Union. Most Outrageous: *politically correct, PC*, adhering to principles of left-wing social concern.

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