

Here's an important assignment. Get serious about learning these F-words, and you will earn far fewer F's while editing during the coming semester.

The 10 common words below are among the most misspelled in the English language. You must learn them. I will be inserting these words **misspelled** in assignments. If you don't spell them correctly, you will earn an F. Know this: In past semesters, I've had students who were still earning F's during the 14th week of class because they didn't know these words. I cannot figure out why. That's why I'm sending you this list now long before the semester starts. **Get serious about learning these F-words and you will earn far fewer F's while editing during the coming semester.**

sergeant (note the first "e")

teenage (one word; no hyphen)

occasion (two "c's" and one "s")

embarrass (two "r's" and two "s's")

all right (two words)

site (not sight—for crime site) **(I catch students right up to the last week of classes on this word. Pls don't let me catch you.)**

protester ("er" never "or.")

accommodate (two "c's" and two "m's")

receive ("i" before "e" except after "c")

occurred (two "c's" and two "r's")

These words below are also F-words. You must delete them from story assignments or suffer an F. You should get well acquainted this list also. You have plenty of time. A little effort here will pay big dividends as the semester unfolds.

1. Experience: According to the late writer critic William Zinsser, this word is one of the ultimate words that signal clutter. He says: "Even your dentist will ask you if you are **experiencing** pain. If he had his own kid in the chair, he would ask, 'Does it hurt?' In his professional role, he not only sounds more important, he blunts the painful edge of truth. It's the language of the flight attendant demonstrating the oxygen mask that will drop down if the plane should run out of air. 'In the unlikely event that the aircraft should experience such an eventuality,' she begins—a phrase so oxygen deprived in itself that we are prepared for any disaster."

2. Individual: The story attributed new developments in a banking scandal to “individuals who have direct knowledge of the investigation.” Why “individuals”? Why not “people”? The answer is that bureaucratese is infectious. At times it’s necessary to distinguish between individuals and groups, so “individual,” singular and plural, has its uses as a noun. Otherwise, such solid old English words as “man,” “woman,” and “people” are just fine. (And “people” is almost always preferable to the stilted “persons,” except on signs about restaurant occupancy, where the bureaucrats rule. --*From CJR’s Language Corner*

3. Allege: This is widely overused and will not protect you from punitive damages in libel litigation. Use such phrasing as ‘the robbery suspect’ or “the accused” if a charge has been filed.

4. Facilitate: Winston Churchill said, “Short words are best and the old words when short are best of all.” You rarely go through a day without hearing “facilitate.” What does it mean? Help? Lead? Coordinate? Troubleshoot? Say what you mean.--*From CJR Language Corner*

5. Utilize: Of all the bad habits American speakers and writers have, this one seems hardest to break. Too many people who should know better still write and say “utilize” in place of good old “use.” One worthwhile definition for utilize is: to turn to profitable account or use. But usually all people gain by using it is the two syllables and the joy of feeling superior when in fact it sounds ridiculous. (“Utilization” is even more abominable.) Let’s not let our language make us look foolish. That’s what car phones are for.—*From CJR’s Language Corner.*

6. Arguably: It is a cliché and way overused. To quote George Carlin, "It's weak. It tries to have things both ways. Take a stand!" And by the way, what is the argument, and who is arguing with whom?

7. Impactful: (adj) has come into wide use by those who may lack a respect for the sound of good English. It has been called a buzzword and is used widely now in lackluster business writing, and by mainstream publishers. **Impactful** first appeared in print in 1968, according to the Online Etymology Dictionary. The language does change, but who could possibly think that **impactful** is an improvement over **powerful** or **influential**? If the business world wants to use it, fine, but no novelist or poets who might come out of that world would. Usage expert Bryan Garner, the American

equivalent of England's H.W. Fowler, calls **impactful** "barbarous jargon" and "a word to be scorned" in his "Dictionary of Modern American Usage."

8. Iconic: This word appears everywhere now. It is as if reporters have learned a new word and can't wait to show you they know how to use it.