

Contacts for Word of the Year:

American Dialect Society

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“*Bailout*” Voted 2008 Word of the Year by American Dialect Society

HILTON SAN FRANCISCO—JAN. 9—In its 19th annual words of the year vote, the American Dialect Society voted “*bailout*” as the word of the year. In the specific sense used most frequently in 2008, *bailout* refers to the rescue by the government of companies on the brink of failure, including large players in the banking industry.

Presiding at the Jan. 9 voting session were ADS Executive Secretary Allan Metcalf of MacMurray College, and Grant Barrett, chair of the New Words Committee of the American Dialect Society and co-host of the nationwide public radio show *A Way with Words*. Barrett is also the incoming editor of the column “Among the New Words” in the society’s quarterly academic journal *American Speech*.

“When you vote for *bailout*, I guess you’re really voting for ‘hope’ and ‘change,’ too,” Barrett said. “Though you’d think a room full of pointy-headed intellectuals could come up with something more exciting.”

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 vote is the longest-running such vote anywhere, the only one not tied to commercial interests, and *the* word-of-the-year event up to which all others lead. It is fully informed by the members’ expertise in the study of words, but it is far from a solemn occasion. Members in the 119-year-old organization include linguists, lexicographers, etymologists, grammarians, historians, researchers, writers, authors, editors, professors, university students, and independent scholars. In conducting the vote, they act in fun and do not pretend to be officially inducting words into the English language. Instead they are highlighting that language change is normal, ongoing, and entertaining.

In a companion vote, sibling organization the American Name Society voted “*Barack Hussein Obama*” as Name of the Year for 2008 in its fifth annual name-of-the-year contest.

AMERICAN DIALECT SOCIETY VOTE TALLIES

The number after each nomination is the number of votes it received. Numbers separated by slash marks indicate a run-off. Voting totals are for each category might not be identical because the number of voters might have changed for each category.

WORD OF THE YEAR WINNER: bailout, the rescue by the government of companies on the brink of failure, including large players in the banking industry. 37/74

Other nominees for word of the year:

Barack Obama: Both names as combining forms in a large number of new words. A combining form is a word or part of a word that can be used as the root or basis of other words. 28/43

lipstick on a pig: An adornment of something that can't be made pretty. 16

change: Not so much a buzzword as political wallpaper, background noise, and ambient energy rolled into one. The idea of discarding old ideas and methods seemed to underlie everything said by national political candidates. 14

shovel-ready: Used to describe infrastructure projects that can be started quickly when funds become available 5

game-changer: In business and politics, something that alters the nature of a marketplace, relationship, or campaign. From sports 'something that changes a match or contest.' 2

—MOST USEFUL—

WINNER: Barack Obama: Both names as combining forms. 41/72

text(ing), in *driving while texting (DWT)*, the sending of text messages while conducting and automobile, and *textwalker*, a person who texts while walking. 38/34

bailout: The rescue by the government of companies on the brink of failure, including large players in the banking industry. 14

Palinesque: Pertaining to a person who has extended themselves beyond their expertise, thereby bringing ridicule upon a serious matter. 11

—MOST CREATIVE—

WINNER: recombobulation area: An area at Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee in which passengers that have just passed through security screening can get their clothes and belongings back in order. 94

long photo: A video of 90 seconds or less. Used by the photo-sharing web site Flickr. 5

skadoosh: A nonsense interjection popularized by Jack Black in the movie *Kung Fu Panda*. 3

rofflenui: A blended New Zealand English-Maori word that means "rolling on the floor laughing a lot." 1

—MOST UNNECESSARY—

WINNER: moofing: From "mobile out of office," meaning working on the go with a laptop and cell phone. Created by a PR firm. 35/53

First Dude: The husband of a governor or president. 36/43

bromance: A very close relationship between two heterosexual men. 28

—MOST OUTRAGEOUS—

WINNER: terrorist fist jab: A knuckle-to-knuckle fist bump, or "dap," traditionally performed between two black people as a sign of friendship, celebration or agreement. It was called the "terrorist fist jab" by the newscaster E. D. Hill, formerly of Fox News. 88

body-snarking: Posting pictures and commenting negatively on the bodies of the people in them. 10

fish pedicure: A cosmetic procedure in which fish eat the dead skin off the feet. 9

baby mama: From a man's point of view, a woman to whom he is not married and who is the mother of his child. 2

—MOST EUPHEMISTIC—

WINNER: scooping technician: A person whose job it is to pick up dog poop. 66

age-doping: The falsification of records to show that an athlete meets participation requirements for a sporting event. 32

thought showers: Coined by a British city council because the synonym “brainstorming” was said to be offensive to epileptics. 11

—**MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED**—

WINNER: shovel-ready: Used to describe infrastructure projects that can be started quickly when funds become available. 47/76

Tw-, tweet-, twitt- Combining forms all connoting a relationship to Twitter, a free nano-blogging service. 27/19

[name] the [job]: Joe the Plumber, etc. 12

Phelpsiian: Excellent in the fashion of swimmer Michael Phelps, who won eight medals and set seven world records in the 2008 Summer Olympics. 6

-licious: A suffix which connotes desirability or attractiveness of the thing whose name it is combined with. 1

—**LEAST LIKELY TO SUCCEED**—

WINNER: PUMA: An acronym for Party Unity My Ass, used by Democrats who were disaffected after Hillary Clinton failed to secure a sufficient number of delegates. It was later said to stand for Party Unity Means Action. 88

nuke the fridge: To ruin a movie franchise through the arrogance of a successful producer or director. 14

-cation: Suffix connotating “vacation” in blends like *mancation*, *staycation*, *hurrication*, *evacucation*. 1

—**NEW CATEGORY: ELECTION-RELATED WORDS**—

WINNER: maverick: A person who is beholden to no one. Widely used by the Republican Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates, John McCain and Sarah Palin. Also in the adjectival form *mavericky*, used by Tina Fey portraying Palin on *Saturday Night Live*. 73

lipstick on a pig: An adornment of something that can’t be made pretty. 37

hopey-changey: Derisive epithet incorporating Obama’s two main buzzwords (also **dopey hopey changey**). 8

hockey mom: A mother who spends a great deal of time and money aggressively abetting her children’s interest in the sport of hockey. 2

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

2007 Word of the Year, *subprime*, an adjective used to describe a risky or less than ideal loan, mortgage, or investment. Most Useful: *green- prefix/compounding form*, designates environmental concern, as in *greenwashing*. Most Creative: *googlegänger*, a person with your name who shows up when you google yourself. Most Unnecesssary: *Happy Kwanhanamas!* [*Kwanza* + *Hanukka* + *Christmas*] Happy holidays! Most Outrageous: *toe-tapper*, A homosexual. Senator Larry Craig was arrested in June

for an encounter in a public restroom in which toe-tapping was said to have been used as a sexual come-on. Most Euphemistic: *human terrain team*, a group of social scientists employed by the US military to serve as cultural advisers in Iraq or Afghanistan. Most Likely to Succeed: *green-prefix/compounding form*, designates environmental concern, as in *greenwashing*. Least Likely to Succeed: *strand-in*, protest duplicating being stranded inside an airplane on a delayed flight. New Category, Real Estate Words: *subprime*, used to describe a risky or poorly documented loan or mortgage.

2006 Word of the Year, *to be plutoed, to pluto*, to be demoted or devalued. Most Useful: *climate canary*, an organism or species whose poor health or declining numbers hint at a larger environmental catastrophe on the horizon. Most Creative: *lactard*, a person who is lactose-intolerant. Most Unnecessary: *SuriKat*, the supposed nickname of the baby girl of Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes. Most Outrageous: *Cambodian accessory*, Angelina Jolie's adopted child who is Cambodian. Most Euphemistic: *waterboarding*, an interrogation technique in which the subject is immobilized and doused with water to simulate drowning; reported to be used by U.S. interrogators against terrorism detainees. Most Likely to Succeed: *YouTube* as a verb, to use the YouTube web site or to have a video of one's self be posted on the site. Least Likely to Succeed: *grup*, a Gen-Xer who does not act his or her age. New Category, Pluto-Related Words: *to be plutoed, to pluto*, to be demoted or devalued.

2005 Word of the Year *truthiness*, what one wishes to be the truth regardless of the facts. (From the *Colbert Report* with Stephen Colbert, a mock news show on Comedy Central.) Most Useful: *podcast*, audio or video file for downloading. Most Creative: *whale-tail*, the appearance of thong or g-string underwear above the waistband. Most Unnecessary: *K Fed*, Kevin Federline, Mr. Britney Spears. Most Outrageous: *crotchfruit*, a child or children. Most Euphemistic: *internal nutrition* force-feeding a prisoner. Most Likely to Succeed: *sudoku* number puzzle from Japan. Least Likely to Succeed: *pope-squatting* registering a likely domain name of a new pope before the pope chooses his new name in order to profit from it. Special nonce category, Best Tom Cruise-Related Word: *jump the couch*, to exhibit frenetic behavior like Cruise's couch-bouncing on Oprah Winfrey's talk show.

2004 Word of the Year: *red/blue/purple states*, red favoring conservative Republicans and blue favoring liberal Democrats, as well as the undecided *purple states* in the political map of the United States. Most Useful: *phish*, to induce someone to reveal private information by means of deceptive e-mail. Most Creative: *pajamahadeen*, bloggers who challenge and fact-check traditional media. Most Unnecessary: *stalkette*, a female stalker. Most Outrageous: *santorum*, byproduct of anal sex, using the name of a senator opposed to the practice. Most Euphemistic: *badly sourced*, false. Most Likely to Succeed: *red/blue/purple states*. Least Likely to Succeed: *FLOHPA*, Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, important states in the 2004 presidential election.

2003 Word of the Year: *metrosexual*, fashion-conscious heterosexual male. Most Useful: *flexitarian*, vegetarian who occasionally eats meat. Most Creative: *freegan*, person who eats only free food. Most Unnecessary: *freedom* for "French," as in fries and kisses. Most Outrageous: *cliterati*, feminist writers or leaders. Most Euphemistic: *pre-emptive self-defense*, attack before a possible attack on oneself. Most Likely to Succeed: *SARS*, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, viral disease first reported in Asia in February. Least Likely to Succeed: *tomacco*, poisonous hybrid of tomato and tobacco. Best Revival of an old term: *spider hole*, World War II term for a hole deeper than a foxhole used for surprise attacks; in 2003, where Saddam Hussein was hiding.

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 Iraq. Most Unnecessary: *wombanization*, feminization, from Alexander Barnes's book "The Book Read Backwards: The Deconstruction of Patriarchy and the Wombanization of Being." Most Outrageous: *neuticles*, fake testicles for neutered pets. Most Euphemistic: *regime change*, forced change in leadership.

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.)

(Also chosen in January 2000: Word of the Decade: *web*. Word of the Twentieth Century: *jazz*. Word of the Millennium: *she*.)

1999 Word of the Year: *Y2K*. Most Likely to Succeed and Most Useful: *dot-com*, a company operating on the web. Most Original: *cybersquat*, to register a web address intending to sell it at a profit. Most unnecessary: *Milly*, dance commissioned by the city of Chicago for the millennium. Most Outrageous: *humanitarian intervention*, use of military force for humanitarian purposes. Most Euphemistic: *compassionate conservative*. Brand New (coined during the year, not previously attested): *Pokémonia*, obsession with Pokémon.

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: *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.

1993 Word of the Year: *information superhighway*, network linking computers, television, telephone, and other electronic means of communication. Most Likely to Succeed: quotative *like* with a form of the verb *be* to indicate speech or thought. Most Useful: *thing* premodified by a noun, e.g. “a Chicago thing.” Most Imaginative: *McJob*, a generic, unstimulating, low-paying job. Most Amazing: *cybersex*, sexual stimulation by computer. Most Unnecessary: *mosaic culture* to describe a multicultural society. Most Outrageous: *whirlpooling*, assault of a female by a male group in a swimming pool. Most Euphemistic: *street builder*, a homeless person who constructs a shanty. Most Unpronounceable: *Jurassosaurus nedegoapeferkimorum*, a new dinosaur.

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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