

Contacts for Word of the Year:

# American Dialect Society

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## **“Because” 2013 Word of the Year, as voted by American Dialect Society**

HILTON MINNEAPOLIS—JAN. 3—In its 24th annual words of the year vote, the American Dialect Society voted “*because*” as the Word of the Year for 2013. The selection recognized that *because* is now being used in new ways to introduce a noun, adjective, or other part of speech.

Presiding at the Jan. 3 voting session were ADS Executive Secretary Allan Metcalf of MacMurray College, and Ben Zimmer, chair of the New Words Committee of the American Dialect Society and executive producer of Vocabulary.com and the Visual Thesaurus. Zimmer is also the language columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*.

“This past year, the very old word *because* exploded with new grammatical possibilities in informal online use,” Zimmer said. “No longer does *because* have to be followed by *of* or a full clause. Now one often sees tersely worded rationales like ‘because science’ or ‘because reasons.’ You might not go to a party ‘because tired.’ As one supporter put it, *because* should be Word of the Year ‘because useful!’”

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.

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 125-year-old organization include linguists, lexicographers,

etymologists, grammarians, historians, researchers, writers, editors, 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 “*Francis*” as Name of the Year for 2013 in its tenth annual name-of-the-year contest, to commemorate the ascendancy of Pope Francis.

## AMERICAN DIALECT SOCIETY VOTE TALLIES

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

### WORD OF THE YEAR

\* **because**: introducing a noun, adjective, or other part of speech (e.g., “because reasons,” “because awesome”). 127

**slash**: used as a coordinating conjunction to mean “and/or” (e.g., “come and visit slash stay”) or “so” (“I love that place, slash can we go there?”). 21

**twerk**: A mode of dance that involves vigorous booty-shaking and booty-thrusting, usually with the feet planted. 7

**Obamacare**: term for the Affordable Care Act that has moved from pejorative to matter-of-fact shorthand. 39

**selfie**: a photo taken of oneself, typically with a smartphone and shared on social media. 20

### MOST USEFUL

\* **because**: introducing a noun, adjective, or other part of speech (e.g., “because reasons,” “because awesome”). 64/117

**slash**: used as a coordinating conjunction to mean “and/or” (e.g., “come and visit slash stay”) or “so” (“I love that place, slash can we go there?”). 51/79

**selfie**: a photo taken of oneself, typically with a smartphone and shared on social media. 37

**strug(gle) bus**: metaphor for a difficult situation, as in “I’m riding the struggle bus.” Also a verb. 32

**ACC**: “aggressive carbon-copy,” used to undermine the position of the recipient of an email, such as cc’ing the boss or legal counsel.

### MOST CREATIVE

\* **catfish**: to misrepresent oneself online, especially as part of a romantic deception. 62/94

**doge**: an Internet meme with intentionally ungrammatical exclamations over an image of a dog (typically the Shiba Inu breed). 70/88

**bitcoin**: an anonymous, decentralized, digital, encrypted currency and payment system. 4

**robo sapiens**: a class of robots with human-like intelligence. 51

**MOST UNNECESSARY**

- \* **sharknado**: a tornado full of sharks, as featured in the Syfy Channel movie of that name. 162
- cronut**: a croissant-doughnut hybrid. 18
- stack-ranking**: a method of ranking employees on a primitive curve (used and abandoned by Microsoft). 11

**MOST OUTRAGEOUS**

- \* **underbutt**: the underside of buttocks, made visible by certain shorts or underwear. 54/110
- revenge porn**: vindictive posting of sexually explicit pictures of someone without consent. 46/75
- fatberg**: large deposit of fat, grease, and solid sewage found in London sewers. 26
- s(c)hmeat**: (blend of *sheet* + *meat*): meat product grown in a lab. 17
- thigh gap**: a space between the thighs, taken by some as a sign of attractiveness (also *box gap*). 43

**MOST EUPHEMISTIC**

- \* **least untruthful**: involving the smallest necessary lie (used by intelligence director James Clapper). 121
- demised**: laid off from employment (used by the bank HSBC). 16
- slimdown**: reinterpretation of “shutdown” used on Fox News site. 72

**MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED**

- \* **binge-watch**: to consume vast quantities of a single show or series of visual entertainment in one sitting. 117
- drone**: (trans. verb) to target with a drone, typically in a lethal drone strike. 19
- glasshole**: a person made oblivious by wearing Google Glass, a head-mounted computer. 21
- Obamacare**: term for the Affordable Care Act that has moved from pejorative to matter-of-fact shorthand. 51

**LEAST LIKELY TO SUCCEED**

- \* **Thanksgivukkah**: confluence of Thanksgiving and the first day of Hanukkah that will not be repeated for another 70,000 years. 159
- birthmas**: a simultaneous celebration of a birthday and Christmas. 19
- Harlem Shake**: a video meme featuring comic, convulsive dancing accompanied by excerpt of the song “Harlem Shake” by the DJ Baauer. 19

**MOST PRODUCTIVE (new category)**

- \* **-shaming**: (from *slut-shaming*) type of public humiliation (*fat-shaming*, *pet-shaming*). 98/132
- splaining**: (from *mansplaining*) type of condescending explanation (*whitesplaining*, *journosplaining*). 49/68
- coin**: (from *bitcoin*) type of cryptocurrency (*peercoin*, *namecoin*, *dogecoin*). 0
- (el)fie**: (from *selfie*) type of self-portrait (*drelfie* ‘drunk selfie,’ *twofie* ‘selfie with two people’). 39
- hack**: (from *lifehack*) type of shortcut to increase productivity. 13
- spo**: (from *thinspo*) type of photo or video montage intended to inspire viewers to lose weight or stay fit (*fitspo*, *sportspo*). 1

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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](http://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.

**American Dialect Society Words of Previous Years are at  
<http://americandialect.org/woty>**

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