

American Dialect Society

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(For immediate release)

Jan. 6, 2023

American Dialect Society Selects “-ussy” as 2022 Word of the Year

HYATT REGENCY DENVER AT COLORADO CONVENTION CENTER, DENVER, CO—JAN. 6—
The American Dialect Society, in its 33rd annual words-of-the-year vote, selected the suffix
“-ussy” as the Word of the Year for 2022. More than two hundred attendees took part in the
deliberations and voting, joining both in person and virtually, in a hybrid event hosted in
conjunction with the Linguistic Society of America’s annual meeting.

Presiding at the Jan. 6 voting session was Ben Zimmer, chair of the ADS New Words
Committee and language columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*.

“The selection of the suffix *-ussy* highlights how creativity in new word formation
has been embraced online in venues like TikTok,” Zimmer said. “The playful suffix builds
off the word *pussy* to generate new slang terms. The process has been so productive lately
on social media sites and elsewhere that it has been dubbed *-ussification*.”

For more on the *-ussy* phenomenon, see the *Vulture* article by Bethy Squires, “[We Asked Linguists Why People Are Adding -Ussy to Every Word](#)”: “Riffing off ‘bussy’ (a portmanteau of ‘boy’ and ‘pussy’), now everything is a cat or a cavity. A calzone is a pizzussy. A wine bottle has a winussy.” See also Michael Dow’s scholarly paper, “[A corpus study of phonological factors in novel English blends](#).”

Word of the Year is interpreted in its broader sense as “vocabulary item”—not just
words but also phrases, compounds, and affixes. The items do not have to be brand-new,
but they have to be newly prominent or notable in the past year. This is not the first time
an affix has been named Word of the Year: in 1998, the prefix *e-* (as in *email*) was selected.

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 133-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.

AMERICAN DIALECT SOCIETY VOTING RESULTS

Raw vote totals and percentages of the vote are given after each nomination. In cases requiring a runoff, two figures are given. Winners are indicated by an asterisk.

WORD OF THE YEAR (2023)

* **-ussy**: suffix from "pussy" (as in "bussy" = "boy pussy," now humorously attached to many words); also **-ussification**: the process of creating new blended words with the *-ussy* suffix 108

Dark Brandon: sinister, powerful alter ego of Joe Biden (play on "Let's Go Brandon") 19

quiet quitting: doing no more than the minimum required for a job 32

rizz: effortless attractiveness or style (short for "charisma") 11

Slava Ukraini: "Glory to Ukraine!" (said in solidarity with Ukrainian resistance) 25

special military operation: Russian designation for invasion of Ukraine 23

MOST USEFUL/MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED

* **quiet quitting**: doing no more than the minimum required for a job 90/115

climate criminal: celebrity who flies excessively via private jet 12

longtermism: ethical position that prioritizes improving the long-term future 5

nepo baby: celebrity who is the child of a celebrity 27

rizz: effortless attractiveness or style (short for "charisma") 84/92

POLITICAL WORD OF THE YEAR

* **Dark Brandon**: sinister, powerful alter ego of Joe Biden (play on "Let's Go Brandon") 110

Dobbs: Supreme Court decision reversing abortion rights (as in "post-Dobbs") 38

pink trickle/splash: result of Republican "red wave" in midterms not materializing 19

Slava Ukraini: "Glory to Ukraine!" (said in solidarity with Ukrainian resistance) 18

Woman, Life, Freedom: rallying cry for women's rights in Iran and elsewhere 24

DIGITAL WORD OF THE YEAR

* **-dle**: suffix for Wordle-like games (Heardle, Absurdle, Foodle, Worldle, Redactle, etc.) 84/118

BFFR: initialism for "be fucking for real" 14

chief twit: self-designation of Elon Musk after acquiring Twitter 4
chronically online: spending so much time online that it warps one's sense of reality 30
crypto rug pull: scam in which a fraudulent development team pumps a cryptocurrency token before disappearing with the funds, leaving investors with a valueless asset 8
touch grass: go outside (antidote to spending too much time online) 64/87
-verse: online world, as in Metaverse (Facebook's VR platform) or Fediverse (federated servers on Mastodon) 8

INFORMAL WORD OF THE YEAR

* **it's giving (X):** description of something exuding a particular vibe or energy (from Black drag culture) 94/126
dickriding: currying favor or sucking up to someone 22
(the) ick: feeling of disgust about one's date 8
menty b: mental breakdown 29
rizz: effortless attractiveness or style (short for "charisma") 67/84

MOST CREATIVE WORD OF THE YEAR

* **-ussy:** suffix from "pussy" (as in "bussy" = "boy pussy," now humorously attached to many words) 163
blorbo (from my shows): beloved fictional character from television or other media 9
-dle: suffix for Wordle-like games (Heardle, Absurdle, Foodle, Worldle, Redactle, etc.) 24
moid/foid: derogatory terms for men and women in incel culture 0
short king: positive or affectionate term for a man of modest stature 18

EUPHEMISM OF THE YEAR

* **special military operation:** Russian designation for invasion of Ukraine 50/121
camping: access to abortion, as used in informal networks circumventing state anti-abortion laws 37
diverse-owned: of a business, owned by members of historically underrepresented groups 7
leg booty: algspeak substitution for LGBT 52/86
pronouns: trans/nonbinary gender identities, as used in transphobic rhetoric to mock pronoun choice 31
résumé embellishment: lying about one's accomplishments 32

SNOWCLONE/PHRASAL TEMPLATE OF THE YEAR

* **not X:** ironic framing device expressing an attitude of mock horror or incredulity 82/125
if I text you X, it means Y: explaining how to interpret an emoji or series of emojis 9
#IStandWithX: expression of solidarity 26
it's the X for me: singling out a notable or funny aspect of something, or finding fault with someone 26
she's/he's a 10, but X: pointing out a negative or quirky quality of someone 28
X hits different: describing an experience that is affecting in a meaningful way 41/79

EMOJI OF THE YEAR

* 🦴 [skull]: expressing figurative death (from laughter, frustration, etc.) 72/108

😓 [melting face]: expressing embarrassment or dread 67/90

👉 [saluting face]: sign of respect or solidarity 9

😬 [dotted line face]: feeling of invisibility 8

🚩 [red flag]: signaling danger or problems 2

🟡🟢 [colored boxes]: for Wordle results 45

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.

American Dialect Society Words of Previous Years are at

<http://americandialect.org/woty>