



Dear Reader,

Summer is a great time for verbs – travelling, sailing, swimming, relaxing. However, regardless of the season, there are some so-called verbs that should never be allowed out to play. This issue of **EC Buzz** tells these ‘verbs’ to *buzz off*.

We’ll be back on a monthly schedule in September. Until then, have a wonderful summer.



Elizabeth Cockle
Copywriter and Buzzword Banisher

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Nouns that Simply Shouldn’t Be Verbed

One of the characteristic and dynamic features of English is its extreme malleability. The practice of changing nouns into verbs is hardly new (after all, Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth said “Unsex me here”), but these days it’s becoming increasingly indiscriminate (street sign seen in Pittsburgh: “Don’t gridlock please”).

Depending on your point of view, verbing either invigorates the language or merely indicates laziness or poor language skills. The best advice is not to be in the vanguard of change but to wait until the fuss dies down – nobody worries now if you *host* a party or *contact* a friend.

Here are some examples where caution should still reign:

1. **Dialogue.** Topic for discussion: “Whatever happened to the art of conversation?” Try *talking*. *Have* a dialogue. But for goodness’ sake, don’t *dialogue*.
2. **Impact.** Probably a losing battle in the long run, but for now a significant portion of your audience will want to smack you for abusing *impact*. So try to *have an impact on* or, better yet, *affect* the situation.
3. **Action.** A verb may be an action word, but that doesn’t make *action* a verb. There’s a narrow legal usage meaning to *institute legal proceedings against*, but as a general rule, use *act*. Just do it.
4. **Task.** You may be called to task if you *task* your team members. Give them a task to complete, or at the very least, something to do.

Buzz Off : *Cutting edge* and *bleeding edge*

EC Buzz has the knives out for *cutting edge* and its more extreme rival, *bleeding edge*. Once sharp, incisive images, these clichés have been blunted through overuse, and indeed, misuse. *Bleeding edge* was originally coined to signify the element of risk in adopting advanced unproven technology, but is now often used simply to trump *cutting edge*, which itself was just intended to eclipse the tried and true *leading edge*.

Instead of saying something is *cutting-edge*, let alone *on the bleeding edge*, lead with one of these:

- “advanced”
- “at the forefront”
- “pioneering”

Which buzzword is your pet peeve? Send your suggestion to writer@ecwriting.com, then look for your buzzword and name in an upcoming issue.

Parting Words

“Verbing weirds language.”

– Bill Watterson, cartoonist, *Calvin and Hobbes*