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Dear Reader,

Here's another helping of readers' pet peeves to welcome in the new year. Next to political words, it seems *ECBuzz* readers are also getting weary (or wary) of economic expressions.

Wishing you a peaceful, recession-proof 2009,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Elizabeth Cockle'.

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Copywriter and Buzzword Banisher

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Readers' Pet Peeves

1. **Economic downturn.** One reason for this popular euphemism is that *recession* and *depression* have precise definitions in economics. Besides, the word "depression" is just so, well, depressing, that even referring to the possibility of one is enough to make people frown (or would that be, experience a "smile downturn"?).
 2. **Crisis.** Last month, we mentioned that, thanks to 24-hour cable news networks, virtually every event has become *breaking news*, to the point where it's almost impossible to sort out what's actually newsworthy. Similarly, *crisis* has been applied to so many things – housing, markets, energy, oil, the Middle East – that the word itself is having an identity crisis.
 3. **Negative growth.** Let's just call this euphemism what it is: *shrinkage*. When an economist dies, do they call it "negative resurrection"?
 4. **Green.** It's great to be green – though, as a certain frog once said, it isn't easy. But now that green has become a ubiquitous marketing term, it's beginning to turn yellow. And hearing it used as a verb (as in "let's green the office") makes us feel a little green around the gills.
 5. **Strategic.** The word itself ought to be deployed strategically, instead of showing up randomly and all too often. After all, unless you make decisions with a dartboard or roulette wheel, almost *everything* in business should be strategic.
 6. **Directional.** This is frequently used to emphasize that some plan or policy is "moving in the right direction". But *directional* does not imply any specific direction – it could just as easily indicate "moving in the wrong direction." Remember that the law of gravity means that things are more likely to go down than up.
 7. **Net-net.** Since results normally come at the end of a process, the qualifiers in "*end result*" or "*net result*" are arguably redundant. But the all-too common buzzword *net-net* is just plain ridiculous – and it makes the user sound like a bit of a dumb-dumb.
 8. **"Can I ask you a question?"** It can be tedious when people use this to preface a question they're going to ask anyway. It's tempting to answer, "Yes, but you only get one, and that was it."
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Parting Words

"Economics is a subject profoundly conducive to cliché, resonant with boredom. On few topics is an American audience so practiced in turning off its ears and minds. And none can say that the response is ill advised."

– John Kenneth Galbraith, economist (1908-2006)