



Dear Reader,

English is an extraordinarily flexible and fast-growing language. In fact, the Global Language Monitor (www.languagemonitor.com) reports that a new English-language word is created every 98 minutes. At this rate, English will cross the one million mark towards the end of June this year.

The downside is that English is prone to mangling that threatens to leave readers and listeners bent out of shape. Back in [Summer 2006](#) we looked at *verbing*, the twisting of ordinary nouns into verbs, which is reaching epidemic proportions.

Sometimes verbing creates fresh, vivid uses of English and promotes conciseness and brevity. Other times, as *Calvin and Hobbes* once said, verbing just weirds language. This month we look at six more “verbed” nouns (or “nerbs”, as coined by technical communicator Nancy Allison (www.stcboston.org/archives/articles/nouns.shtml)) that will certainly weird your marketing copy.



Elizabeth Cockle
Copywriter and Buzzword Banisher

In this issue...

- Six More Nouns that Shouldn't Be Verbed
- Buzz Off : *Incent*
- Parting Words

Six More Nouns that Shouldn't Be Verbed

1. **Loan.** *Loan* and *lend* have come to be interchangeable as verbs in casual American English. However, formally *loan* is the noun and *lend* is the verb. Keep this in mind when addressing a British audience, if you want to ensure they lend you their ears.
2. **Gift.** The introduction of *gift* as a verb, presumably because *give* sounds so ordinary, is simply linguistic laziness. Several perfectly good descriptive verbs already exist, such as *award*, *donate* and *endow*. So avoid looking this gift horse in the mouth.
3. **Trial.** Hearing this noun used as a verb can *try* or *test* your patience. Enough said.
4. **Conference.** There's already a verb associated with conference: the shorter *confer*. Save your breath by dropping the superfluous final syllable. Better yet, *talk* might do the trick.
5. **Version / versioning.** The likely culprits for introducing *version* as a verb are the producers of document management software. Of course what they really mean is to *amend*, *revise*, *adapt* or *customize* a document – actually, they also like to talk about *revisioning*.
6. **Architect / architecting.** Another gross example of computer-speak that should never have left the building. Wouldn't you sooner have someone *solve* or *fix* your problem rather than *architect a solution* to it?

Buzz Off : *Incent*

Although mentioned in a recent reader pet peeves issue ([December 2008](#)), we've singled out *incent* again as a prime example of gratuitous verbing. In fact, it's so incendiary we're incensed about it.

This truly ugly backformation of *incentive* is totally needless, given the number of worthy real verbs available. Let's *incite*, *induce*, *motivate*, *convince* or otherwise *persuade* its users to ditch it. The same goes for *incentivize*!

Which buzzword is your pet peeve? Send your suggestion to writer@ecwriting.com, and we'll do our best to send it packing in a future issue.

Parting Words

“First they came for the verbs, and I said nothing because verbing weirds language. Then they arrival for the nouns, and I speech nothing because I no verbs.”

– Peter Ellis, as posted in alt.fan.pratchett.