



Issue No. 34, Summer 2009

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the summer edutainment issue of **EC Buzz**. This issue looks at the portmanteau – or “suitcase” – word, which is created by blending the sounds and meaning of two or more separate words.

Portmanteau words get their name from Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*, in which Humpty Dumpty explains the derivation of neologisms such as *mimsy* (miserable + flimsy) and *frumious* (fuming + furious). Today “ragazines” insist on bestowing portmanteaux on celebrity couples as joint monikers, such as “Brangelina” (Brad Pitt + Angelina Jolie) and “TomKat” (Tom Cruise + Katie Holmes).

Happy summer reading,

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## Six Portmanteau Words that Make You Squiggle

Some portmanteaux are so useful they have become part of the general vocabulary, such as *smog* (smoke + fog), *brunch* (breakfast + lunch), and *Internet* (international + network). Oh, and *squiggle* – well, that’s squirm + wiggle.

Other current examples just seem too clunky or contrived. Here are six we wouldn’t miss:

1. **Biopic** (biography + picture). We don’t call a written biography a “biobook”, so unless you’re writing for *Variety*, it’s appropriate to call a film of someone’s life a biography as well.
2. **Celebutard** (celebrity + debutant + retard). Coined by the gossip website *Gawker*, this one’s demeaning to the mentally impaired – particularly since they’re being undeservedly lumped in with the likes of Paris Hilton.
3. **Feminazi** (feminist + Nazi). Popularized by reactionary blowhard radio host Rush Limbaugh as a pejorative term for feminists, this is not only insulting to women but too ridiculous to be taken seriously.
4. **Infomercial** (information + commercial). Let’s call it what it is: a 30-minute TV commercial. You’re not going to learn much after the first minute – except that if you call within the next 30 minutes you’ll also get some freebie. And beware – it could really be a *fictomercial*!
5. **Twitterati** (Twitter + glitterati). Referring to the most widely read users of the microblogging site *Twitter*, this is annoying for two reasons: (a) *twitterati* is a second-generation portmanteau, since *glitterati* itself is a blend of glitter and literati, and (b) it’s hard to imagine anything particularly literary being written in 140 characters or less.
6. **Webtrapreneur** (Web + entrepreneur). *Entrepreneur* on its own should suffice instead of this ugly Frankenword. Besides, what business today doesn’t make use of the Web?

## Buzz Off : *Contribute*

Too often, congratulatory e-mails and staff bios include sentences such as the following: “Alice has contributed significantly to numerous committees and repeatedly as a board member.”

So... did Alice contribute to the board through keen insight and strategic thinking, or was she just the one who brought the donuts? The vagueness of *contribute* raises the question of how the person contributed. That’s why experts cite it as a resume-weakening word (e.g. see [http://ca.hotjobs.yahoo.com/resume/Words\\_That\\_Weaken\\_Your\\_Resume\\_\\_20031021-1652.html](http://ca.hotjobs.yahoo.com/resume/Words_That_Weaken_Your_Resume__20031021-1652.html)), and it’s no stronger when used in a corporate memo or any other business communication.

Instead of making do with a vague, flabby word like *contribute*, try stating what role the person played, or precisely what he or she achieved.

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Which buzzword is your pet peeve? Send your suggestion to [writer@ecwriting.com](mailto:writer@ecwriting.com), and we’ll do our best to send it packing in a future issue.

## Parting Words

“Rush Limbaugh is what I call a disinfotainer. He entertains by spreading disinformation.”

- Al Franken, political journalist and newly elected U.S. senator