

## For All “Intensive” Purposes: A Primer on Malapropisms, Eggcorns, and Other Rogue Elements of the English Language

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[Interior shot, local restaurant, day.]

Diner One: Is that all you’re ordering for lunch? This new diet must really curve your appetite.

Diner Two: I certainly hope so—it’s costing me a nominal egg!

Diner One: Well, you’d better eat more at the office holiday party, or you’ll be a social leopard, for sure.

Ah, there is nothing like the satisfying *Schadenfreude* that washes over you when you overhear this little exchange one booth over at the local Applebee’s.<sup>1</sup> Not so satisfying is the feeling you get when you read a record of trial and realize that the court reporter accurately noted that you referred to your client as an *escape goat*.<sup>2</sup>

As members of the legal profession, words are the tools of our trade, our weapons of choice, our allies in battle. Unfortunately, the English language can be a fickle friend, quick to trip our tongues and tangle up our prose. Nothing is worse than that sinking feeling you get when you realize that you wrote in a memo that the accused should get his *just desserts*,<sup>3</sup> or that you just *appraised*<sup>4</sup> your boss of a pending legal issue.

An axiom of military strategy is that you must know your enemy to succeed in battle.<sup>5</sup> The same holds true for conquering the English language—you must identify and understand these rogue elements to avoid becoming their victim. This article will orientate<sup>6</sup> you to several categories of confusing words: malapropisms, eggcorns, and mondegreens. In addition to those scattered throughout this article, several commonly misused words and phrases appear in the appendices. By this article’s conclusion, you will be equipped to circumvent these pitfalls and avoid appearing more troglodyte than erudite.<sup>7</sup>

### Malapropisms

“She’s as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile.”

—Mrs. Malaprop, *The Rivals*<sup>8</sup>

Richard Sheridan’s 1775 play *The Rivals* provided not only a memorable character, but also the origin of a term to describe misused words. In *The Rivals*, Mrs. Malaprop litters her dialogue with humorous errors in usage, such as “He is the *pineapple* of politeness.”<sup>9</sup> Her name is derived from the French *mal à propos*, meaning “*mal*, ‘badly,’ *à*, ‘to,’ and *propos*,

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<sup>1</sup> *Schadenfreude* is German for “malicious joy at another’s misfortune.” LE MOT JUSTE: A DICTIONARY OF CLASSICAL AND FOREIGN WORDS AND PHRASES 105 (John Buchanan-Brown et al. eds., 2d ed. 1991) [hereinafter LE MOT JUSTE].

<sup>2</sup> Which of course should be *scapegoat*, unless your case involves a heist on a farm.

<sup>3</sup> *Just desserts* should actually be *just deserts*; “[i]t comes from the French for *deserve*.” BILL BRYSON, BRYSON’S DICTIONARY OF TROUBLESOME WORDS: A WRITER’S GUIDE TO GETTING IT RIGHT 113 (2002).

<sup>4</sup> The correct word is *apprise*, meaning “to inform”; *appraise* means “to assess or evaluate.” *Id.* at 16.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., SUN TZU, THE ART OF WAR bk. 3, at 52 (J.H. Huang trans., William Morrow & Co. 1993) (6th cent. B.C.) (“By perceiving the enemy and perceiving ourselves, there will be no unforeseen risk in any battle.”).

<sup>6</sup> Believe it or not, “orientate” is an actual word. See RANDOM HOUSE WEBSTER’S UNABRIDGED DICTIONARY 1366 (Sol Steinmetz et al. eds., 2d ed. 1998) [hereinafter WEBSTER’S] (defining orientate as “to orient”).

<sup>7</sup> Or avoid appearing deliberately ignorant versus well educated.

<sup>8</sup> RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN, THE RIVALS act 3, sc. 3 (1775).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* (instead of *pinnacle*).

‘purpose, subject,’ and means ‘inappropriate.’”<sup>10</sup> The popularity of *The Rivals* led to the eventual adoption of the term malapropism, defined today as “an act or habit of misusing words ridiculously, esp. by the confusion of words that are similar in sound.”<sup>11</sup> Although malapropisms can be amusing, it all depends on your point of view. It is one thing to chuckle when Johnny Soprano refers to the *albacore* around his neck;<sup>12</sup> it is another to find yourself *floundering* in a sea of your own mistakes.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, the entertainment value of malapropisms has guaranteed their frequent occurrence in both classic literature and popular culture. In addition to Johnny Boy Soprano, several fictional characters have exhibited an endearing penchant for malapropisms over the years. William Shakespeare provided characters like the Nurse from *Romeo and Juliet* (“she will *indite* him to some supper”)<sup>14</sup> and Dogberry from *Much Ado About Nothing* (“O villain! Thou wilt be condemned into everlasting *redemption* for this.”).<sup>15</sup> Lovable bigot Archie Bunker of *All in the Family* also stumbled his way through the English language, resulting in memorable sayings like “he is making *suppository* remarks about our country.”<sup>16</sup> More recently, the titular characters of the popular Australian television show *Kath & Kim* scatter malapropisms about in their quest for middle-class *effluence*.<sup>17</sup>

### Eggcorns

Chazz: *Mind-bottling, isn't it?*

Jimmy: *Did you just say mind-bottling?*

Chazz: *Yeah, mind-bottling. You know, when things are so crazy it gets your thoughts all trapped, like in a bottle?*<sup>18</sup>

Like malapropisms, eggcorns involve the substitution of one word for a similar sounding word. Eggcorns, however, have two characteristics that set them apart from malapropisms. First, eggcorns usually involve homophones or near homophones,<sup>19</sup> compared to malapropisms, which usually involve similar (not identical) sounding words. Second, eggcorns—although technically incorrect—are logically correct in the universe of the speaker. As explained by *The Atlantic's* Ms. Grammar, eggcorns are “‘spontaneous reshapings of known expressions’ which seem to make sense.”<sup>20</sup> The *Blades of Glory* example above illustrates these principles. *Bottling* is only a near-homophone for *boggling*; the feature that distinguishes this eggcorn from a malapropism is that *mind-bottling* makes its own sense, as explained by Chazz.

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<sup>10</sup> WORD HISTORIES AND MYSTERIES: FROM ABRACADABRA TO ZEUS 170 (Patrick Taylor et al. eds., 2004) [hereinafter WORD HISTORIES].

<sup>11</sup> WEBSTER'S, *supra* note 6, at 1163; WORD HISTORIES, *supra* note 10, at 170–71.

<sup>12</sup> *The Sopranos: Down Neck* (HBO television broadcast Feb. 21, 1999). In this episode, Johnny Boy Soprano meant to refer to the *albatross* around his neck—an allusion from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

<sup>13</sup> Another fishy situation arises when you substitute *flounder* for *founder*. “To founder is to sink; to flounder is to struggle clumsily, like a fish out of water.” BILL WALSH, LAPSING INTO A COMMA: A CURMUDGEON'S GUIDE TO THE MANY THINGS THAT CAN GO WRONG IN PRINT—AND HOW TO AVOID THEM 139 (2000).

<sup>14</sup> WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, ROMEO AND JULIET act 3, sc. 1 (emphasis added). The Nurse meant to say *invite*; *indite* means “to compose or write, as a poem.” WEBSTER'S, *supra* note 6, at 973.

<sup>15</sup> WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING act 4, sc. 2 (emphasis added). Here, Dogberry substitutes *redemption* for *damnation*.

<sup>16</sup> *All in the Family: Flashback: Mike Meets Archie* (CBS television broadcast Oct. 16, 1971) (meaning *derogatory*).

<sup>17</sup> This malapropism is often used by the series' regulars instead of *affluence*. See *Kath & Kim* (Austl. Broad. Co. television broadcast 2002–2005; Seven Network television broadcast 2007—). *Kath & Kim* was adapted for American audiences as part of NBC's fall 2008 lineup. See *Kath & Kim* on NBC, TVGUIDE.com, <http://www.tvguide.com/tvshows/kath-kim/293765> (last visited Nov. 3, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> BLADES OF GLORY (Dreamworks SKG 2007).

<sup>19</sup> *Homophone* means “a word pronounced the same as another but differing in meaning, whether spelled the same way or not, as *heir* and *air*.” WEBSTER'S, *supra* note 6, at 916. Compare *homonym*—“a word the same as another in sound and spelling but different in meaning.” *Id.* (emphasis added).

<sup>20</sup> Barbara Wallraff, *Word Court*, ATLANTIC, Sept. 2006, at 148. Wallraff's *Word Court* column appears monthly in the back pages of *The Atlantic*.

As you have probably noticed by now, the word *eggcorn* is also an eggcorn—for *acorn*. The term was developed by “[l]anguage geeks,”<sup>21</sup> namely, linguistics professors Mark Liberman and Geoffrey Pullum.<sup>22</sup> On his blog *Language Log*, Liberman explains why the eggcorn could not be properly defined by one of the existing categories of language errors:

It’s not a folk etymology, because this is the usage of one person rather than an entire speech community.

It’s not a malapropism, because “egg corn” and “acorn” are really homonyms (at least in casual pronunciation), while pairs like “allegory” for “alligator,” “oracular” for “vernacular” and “fortuitous” for “fortunate” are merely similar in sound . . . .

It’s not a mondegreen because the mis-construal is not part of a song or poem or similar performance.<sup>23</sup>

Since its coinage in 2003, the term eggcorn has *spread like wildflower* throughout the language geek community.<sup>24</sup> A search for “eggcorn” on Google turns up about 45,500 results,<sup>25</sup> including references in *Psychology Today*,<sup>26</sup> *The Boston Globe*,<sup>27</sup> and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.<sup>28</sup> A brief look at some of these sites yields gems such as “far-gone conclusion,”<sup>29</sup> “antidotal evidence,”<sup>30</sup> “mute point,”<sup>31</sup> and “girdle one’s loins.”<sup>32</sup> Other examples are included in the appendices.

### Mondegreens

*Olive, the Other Reindeer, used to laugh and call him names . . . .*<sup>33</sup>

An entire generation may have grown up wondering why Olive was so cruel to poor Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. A mistake such as this is a mondegreen—a misheard lyric, phrase, or verse, resulting in the listener substituting words or phrases for similar-sounding words or phrases.<sup>34</sup> In other words, mondegreens are eggcorns in very specific contexts—musical lyrics, poems, and such.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> Mark Liberman is a linguistics professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and Geoffrey Pullman is a linguistics professor at the University of California-Santa Cruz. See *Language Log: About*, [http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll?page\\_id=2](http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll?page_id=2) (last visited Nov. 3, 2008). They started a blog called *Language Log* in 2003, to which twenty-three authors now contribute. *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> Posting of Mark Liberman to *Language Log*, <http://158.130.17.5/%7Emyl/languagelog/archives/000018.html> (Sept. 23, 2003, 12:33 EST) [hereinafter *Liberman Posting*].

<sup>24</sup> Versus *spread like wildfire*.

<sup>25</sup> *Eggcorn* – Google Search, <http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=eggcorn&start=0&sa=N> (last visited Nov. 3, 2008). Admittedly, some of these results appear to be recipes.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Peters, *Word Watch: The Eggcorn*, PSYCHOL. TODAY, Aug. 29, 2006, available at <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/pto-20060214-000002.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Jan Freeman, *Mr. Boffo Lays an Eggcorn*, BOSTONGLOBE.com, Aug. 15, 2007, [http://www.bpstpm/cp/news/globe/ideas/brainiac/2007/08/mr\\_boffo\\_lays\\_a\\_1.html](http://www.bpstpm/cp/news/globe/ideas/brainiac/2007/08/mr_boffo_lays_a_1.html).

<sup>28</sup> Mark Peters, *Like a Bowl in a China Shop*, CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUC., Aug. 9, 2006, available at <http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2006/08/2006080901c.htm>.

<sup>29</sup> Peters, *supra* note 26 (*foregone* conclusion).

<sup>30</sup> Posting of Sharon Hurley Hall to *Daily Writing Tips*, <http://www.dailywritingtips.com/found-any-eggcorns-lately/> (Mar. 10, 2008) (*anecdotal* evidence).

<sup>31</sup> *Id.* (*moot* point).

<sup>32</sup> Peters, *supra* note 28 (*gird* one’s loins).

<sup>33</sup> Snopes.com, *Christmas Carol Mondegreens*, <http://www.snopes.com/holidays/christmas/humor/mondegreens.asp> (last visited Nov. 3, 2008) [hereinafter *Christmas Carol Mondegreens*].

<sup>34</sup> See Random House, *The Maven’s Word of the Day: Mondegreen*, Aug. 11, 1999, <http://www.randomhouse.com/wotd/index.pperl?date=19990811>.

<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., *Liberman Posting*, *supra* note 23. Like eggcorns, mondegreens tend to make their own sort of sense—compared to malapropisms, which are simply incorrect.

Author Sylvia Wright coined the term in a 1954 *Harper's Bazaar* article.<sup>36</sup> She wrote that “[a]s a child she had heard the Scottish ballad “The Bonny Earl of Murray” and she had believed that one stanza went like this:

*Ye Highlands and Ye Lowlands  
Oh where hae you been?  
They hae slay the Earl of Murray,  
And Lady Mondegreen.*<sup>37</sup>

Wright later discovered that what she heard as “Lady Mondegreen” was actually “laid him on the green.”<sup>38</sup> Thus was born the term mondegreen to describe this phenomenon.

Christmas carols (like the “Rudolph” example) seem especially prone to mondegreens, perhaps because they often have “seldom-heard words and phrasings and clever wordplay” and are usually sung by children.<sup>39</sup> For example, to the juvenile ear,

*See the blazing Yule before us  
Strike the harp and join the chorus*

can become

*See the blazing Yulbie forest  
Strike the heart, enjoy the florist.*<sup>40</sup>

Note, however, that mondegreens are unintentional misinterpretations of a song’s lyrics. Therefore, the classic “Jingle bells, Batman smells” ditty would be properly classified as a parody, not a mondegreen.<sup>41</sup>

### **Where to Go for Help, or How to Avoid Cutting Off Your Nose Despite Your Face<sup>42</sup>**

Malapropisms, eggcorns, mondegreens—it is enough to make the *heartiest of souls*<sup>43</sup> take to a *chaise lounge*<sup>44</sup> with the vapors.<sup>45</sup> Fortunately, there are myriad resources you can consult before you *wreck havoc*<sup>46</sup> upon the English language. *Bryson's Dictionary of Troublesome Words* provides an A to Z list of commonly confused words, as well as other advice on spelling, usage, and so forth.<sup>47</sup> It would benefit even the sharpest critic to consult *Bryson's Dictionary* before *honing in* on a perceived error in another’s writing.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, the Internet is a virtual *cachet* of blogs, lists, and rants concerning the

<sup>36</sup> E.g., Jan Freeman, *Mondegreens and Eggcorns*, BOSTONGLOBE.com, Apr. 8, 2007, [http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/brainiac/2007/04/mondegreens\\_and.html](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/brainiac/2007/04/mondegreens_and.html).

<sup>37</sup> Jon Carroll, *Mondegreens*, SFGATE.com, <http://www.sfgate.com/columnists/carroll/mondegreens.shtml> (last visited Nov. 3, 2008). At this site, *San Francisco Gate* columnist Jon Carroll has a repository of columns discussing and cataloguing various mondegreens. *Id.*

<sup>38</sup> E.g., Freeman, *supra* note 36.

<sup>39</sup> Christmas Carol Mondegreens, *supra* note 33.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> Another eggcorn (“cut off your nose to *spite* your face”).

<sup>43</sup> The correct term is *hardiest of souls*, but this eggcorn turns up with alarming frequency. See, e.g., Rachel Wimberly, *Chicago Hotel Strike Averted*, TRADESHOW WK., Sept. 18, 2006, available at <http://www.tradeshowweek.com/article/CA6371826.html> (“a possible strike by 7,000 hotel employees in the host city would test even the heartiest of souls”).

<sup>44</sup> The term *chaise lounge* is commonly used in American English to refer to a chair long enough to support the legs; however, it is technically an eggcorn. The actual French term is *chaise longue*, meaning “long chair.” See LE MOT JUSTE, *supra* note 1, at 64.

<sup>45</sup> Vapors: “a. mental depression or hypochondria. b. injurious exhalations formerly supposed to be produced within the body, esp. in the stomach.” WEBSTER’S, *supra* note 6, at 2105.

<sup>46</sup> The proper idiom is *wreck havoc*. “To ‘wreak’ is to inflict, to cause, to bring about. To ‘wreck’ is to ruin or destroy or dismantle.” Posting of Patricia T. O’Connor to The Grammarphobia Blog, <http://www.grammarphobia.com/blog/2008/10/old-hungarian-goulash.html> (Oct. 31, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> BRYSON, *supra* note 3. Bryson is also a prolific travel writer. See <http://www.randomhouse.com/features/billbryson/flat/about.php> (last visited Nov. 3, 2008).

<sup>48</sup> See BRYSON, *supra* note 3, at 97. “*Hone* means to sharpen . . . or, more rarely, to complain or yearn for.” *Id.* Thus, the proper idiom is *hone in on*. *Id.*

use and abuse of the English language.<sup>49</sup> For example, Professor Bruce W. Hauptli of Florida International University has compiled a list of over 200 malapropisms collected from students over the years.<sup>50</sup> Word enthusiasts who wish to *slack* their thirst for eggcorns can consult sites such as *The Eggcorn Database*, a virtual “eggcornucopia” with over 600 entries.<sup>51</sup> Yogi Berra quotes are also *ripe with* humorous eggcorns and malapropisms, such as “It’s not the heat, it’s the humility.”<sup>52</sup> Finally, the appendices further explain several commonly confused words and phrases.

### Conclusion

On a *whim and a prayer*, you have reached the conclusion, the veritable *coup d’état* of this article. Some of you have anticipated this moment with *baited breath*, while others are completely *disinterested* in the whole thing. *Irregardless* of the camp into which you fall, this article should have *spurned* you to take a new *tact* in your writing and to *insidiously* strive to avoid *desiccating* the English language. If anything, you have hopefully *gleamed* from this article some methods to *flesh out* errors in your writing and *reign* them in. I *command* to you one last bit of advice: Be *discrete* when choosing to *condone* the mistakes of those around you. Nothing is worse than a word snob with *illusions* of grandeur.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The word *cache* is often mispronounced “ka shā” (as in *cachet*) instead of “kash.” *Cache* means “a hiding place, esp. one in the ground, for ammunition, food, treasures, etc.,” whereas *cachet* means “superior status; prestige.” WEBSTER’S, *supra* note 6, at 291.

<sup>50</sup> See Hauptli’s Collection of His Students’ Malapropisms, <http://www.fiu.edu/~hauptli/Malapropisms.html> (last visited Nov. 3, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> The Eggcorn Database, <http://eggcorns.lascribe.net/> (last visited Nov. 3, 2008). The proper idiom is *slake one’s thirst*. Posting of Arnold Zwicky to The Eggcorn Database, <http://eggcorns.lascribe.net/english/989/slack/> (Oct. 21, 2007).

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., PHIL PEPE & WHITEY FORD, THE WIT AND WISDOM OF YOGI BERRA (2002). The proper idiom is *rife with*, meaning “full of, abounding in.” See Posting of Philip B. Corbett to The New York Times Topics Blog, <http://topics.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/08/31/is-it-ripe-or-rife/?pagemode=print> (Aug. 31, 2008, 19:34 EST).

<sup>53</sup> Or delusions of grammar! For an explanation of the sixteen errors in this paragraph, see Appendix B.

## Appendix A

**Attorney.** “A person with a law degree is a *lawyer*. A person who acts on behalf of another person is that person’s *attorney*.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, *attorney* is not an exact synonym for *lawyer*. A Judge Advocate might act as an *attorney* when representing an accused at a court-martial, but would not be described as an Army *attorney*. “When in doubt, use *lawyer*.”<sup>55</sup>

**Bemused.** “Martha watched the play with a *bemused* expression on her face.” This does not mean that Martha was amused or entertained; most likely, she was “confused or bewildered.”<sup>56</sup>

**Empathy, Sympathy.** *Empathy* is “the intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another.”<sup>57</sup> *Sympathy* means “a general kinship with another’s feelings, no matter of what kind . . .”<sup>58</sup> The word *sympathy* is therefore broader; *empathy* implies “deep emotional understanding,” while “*sympathy* can apply to any small annoyance or setback.”<sup>59</sup>

**Enormity.** If the *enormity* of a task overwhelms you, it is not due to its size. Rather, *enormity* “refers to something that is wicked, monstrous, and outrageous . . .”<sup>60</sup> In other words, *enormity* is not a synonym for *enormousness*.

**Flout.** This word is often mistakenly replaced by *flaunt*, as in *flaunting authority*. To *flaunt* means to show off; to *flout* means to defy.<sup>61</sup>

**Imply, Infer.** “Something implied is suggested or indicated, though not expressed. Something inferred is something deduced from evidence at hand.”<sup>62</sup> In other words, a speaker might *imply* something, which the listener could then *infer* from the speaker’s words.

**Jury-rig.** Often confused as *jerry-rig*, *jury-rig* means “made in haste, with whatever materials are at hand, usually as a temporary or emergency measure . . .”<sup>63</sup>

**On tenterhooks.** This is the proper spelling of the idiom meaning “in a state of uneasy suspense or painful anxiety”;<sup>64</sup> often misspelled *on tenderhooks*.

**Torturous, tortuous.** Would a plaintiff drop a case to avoid *torturous* or *tortuous* legal proceedings? Either word may be appropriate, depending on the context. *Torturous*, derived from *torture*, primarily means “involving or causing torture or suffering.”<sup>65</sup> *Tortuous* can mean “full of twists, turns, or bends” but also may refer to something that is overly complex or devious: *a tortuous plot*.<sup>66</sup> In this example, a *torturous* legal proceeding would cause the plaintiff suffering, whereas a *tortuous* proceeding would be overly complex or circuitous.

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<sup>54</sup> WALSH, *supra* note 13, at 105.

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*

<sup>56</sup> *Id.* at 109. The second definition listed in *Webster’s* is “lost in thought; preoccupied.” WEBSTER’S, *supra* note 6, at 192.

<sup>57</sup> WEBSTER’S, *supra* note 6, at 638.

<sup>58</sup> *Id.* at 1927.

<sup>59</sup> BRYSON, *supra* note 3, at 68–69.

<sup>60</sup> *Id.* at 69.

<sup>61</sup> *Id.* at 79.

<sup>62</sup> WILLIAM STRUNK JR. & E.B. WHITE, *THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE* 49 (4th ed. 2000).

<sup>63</sup> BRYSON, *supra* note 3, at 113.

<sup>64</sup> WEBSTER’S, *supra* note 6, at 1957.

<sup>65</sup> *Id.* at 1999.

<sup>66</sup> *Id.*

## Appendix B

1. *On a whim and a prayer* is an eggcorn for *on a wing and a prayer*.<sup>67</sup>
2. *Coup d'état* (violent overthrow of government) should be *coup de grâce* (“grace stroke, final stroke, finishing blow”).<sup>68</sup>
3. *Baited breath* should be *bated breath*, meaning “with breath drawn in or held because of anticipation or suspense . . . .”<sup>69</sup>
4. *Disinterested* should be *uninterested*. If you are *disinterested*, that means you are “unbiased by personal interest or advantage,” not “lacking interest.”<sup>70</sup>
5. *Irregardless* is an irregular word; should be *regardless*.
6. *Spurned* (rejected) should be *spurred*, meaning driven forward as if by spurs.<sup>71</sup>
7. *Take a new tact* is an eggcorn for *take a new tack*, derived from sailing terminology.<sup>72</sup>
8. *Insidiously* (operating in a “stealthily treacherous” way) should be *assiduously* (diligently).<sup>73</sup>
9. *Desiccating* (drying out) should be *deseccating* (treating with sacrilege or profanity).<sup>74</sup>
10. *Gleamed* (shone) should be *gleaned* (learned or discovered gradually).<sup>75</sup>
11. *Flesh out* (put flesh onto, beef up) is an eggcorn for *flush out* (drive something into the open).<sup>76</sup>
12. *Reign in* should be *rein in* (restrain).<sup>77</sup>
13. *Command* should be *commend*. *To command* means to direct someone to do something, while *to commend* means to recommend.<sup>78</sup>
14. *Discrete* (distinct, unrelated) should be *discreet* (circumspect, prudent).<sup>79</sup>
15. *Condone* (forgive, overlook) should be *condemn* (strongly disapprove).<sup>80</sup>
16. *Illusions*, in this example, is a malapropism for *delusions* (false beliefs).<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Posting of Ben Zimmer to The Eggcorn Database, <http://eggcorns.lascribe.net/english/95/whim/> (Feb. 16, 2005).

<sup>68</sup> LE MOT JUSTE, *supra* note 1, at 67.

<sup>69</sup> WEBSTER’S, *supra* note 6, at 176.

<sup>70</sup> *Id.* at 566.

<sup>71</sup> *Id.* at 1848.

<sup>72</sup> WALSH, *supra* note 13, at 212. One of several nautical definitions of *tack* is “the heading of a sailing vessel . . . with reference to wind direction.” WEBSTER’S, *supra* note 6, at 1934. Thus, to *take a new tack* is to head in a new direction (or to take a new course of action). *Id.*

<sup>73</sup> WEBSTER’S, *supra* note 6, at 986, 124.

<sup>74</sup> *Id.* at 538–39.

<sup>75</sup> *Id.* at 811.

<sup>76</sup> Flesh Out/Flush Out, <http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/flesh.html> (last visited Nov. 3, 2008).

<sup>77</sup> WEBSTER’S, *supra* note 6, at 1625.

<sup>78</sup> *Id.* at 410–11.

<sup>79</sup> See BRYSON, *supra* note 3, at 61.

<sup>80</sup> See *id.* at 45; WEBSTER’S, *supra* note 6, at 425.

<sup>81</sup> See WEBSTER’S, *supra* note 6, at 528.