

## Y2K

"I feel like I'm drowning in acronym soup these days." John Charles Robbins, *Petoskey News Review*, Petoskey, Mich.  
"Do we need to abbrev. everything?" asks Paul Beer, Mississauga, Ont.

## COURTESY CALL

Al Schut of Muskegon, Mich., wonders when unsolicited sales calls are ever considered a courtesy.

## BILL CLINTON & MONICA LEWINSKY

"Need I say more? The world has been plagued with the sound of these words for too long. And the mental image that accompanies the phrase?" Heather Newburg, LSSU, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

## HELLO!?

(sometimes pronounced with both syllables drawn out)

Nominated by many for over-use "not as a greeting, but as a condescending comment...a lazy approach to a comeback." Used often with the ever popular (and banished) 'duh!' Christine Caruso, St. Anne High School, Ont.

## AT THE END OF THE DAY

Used by many to summarize a conversation or debate, as in 'at the end of the day, it's all about family values.' "Used by political pundits. This is often recited on evening cable talk shows when the hosts are explaining why, 'at the end of the day, the President will not be impeached.' That may have been true for a particular day, but it did not stand the test of time." Mike McElroy, Good Hart, Mich. "Hollywood types and Washington bureaucrats seem unable to say 'finally' or 'in the end.'" Randall Heeres, English Dept., Northern Michigan Christian H.S., McBain, Mich.

## YOU THE MAN/YOU'RE THE MAN

Nominated by many for over-use, including Jason Alfieri, Cardinal Newman Catholic Secondary East, Stoney Creek, Ont.

Sandy of KFGO in Fargo, ND was one of the first to nominate the phrase during a word banishment interview in January 1998, when she predicted it would be high on the 1999 list. She was correct.

## THE -GATE CONSTRUCTION

Barry from Pinckney, Mich. says he is tired of hearing of all of the -gate words being created in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere. Examples include: Monica-gate, Zipper-gate, Campaign-gate, File-gate, ad nauseam. Canadians had Pepper-gate.' (Sent via cellular phone through David Newman's Show on WJR in Detroit.) "We have long since achieved over-use-gate," says Michele Utterson of Drummond Island, Mich.

## ASK FOR IT BY NAME

Over-used in advertising. "As if there's any other way," says Eric Zonyk of Charlotte, Mich.

## STEP UP/STEP IT UP

"Athletes are always 'stepping up' when all they mean is that some player needs to play better than usual. At halftime, coaches are always telling us their team needs to 'step it up' or a player needs to 'step up' for the team to win." Randy Heeres, McBain, Mich.

"If you do poorly, do you 'step down?' Athletes, do your best. Forget 'stepping up.'" Jim Keith, English Teacher, Buckeye H.S., Medina, Ohio.

## THAT'S GAY

Over-used by many, especially teenagers, to look down on something or express dissatisfaction or disagreement. Lovers of the English language have long bemoaned the loss of the word 'gay,' which went from being light-hearted, merry, bright or lively, to expressing a state of sexuality. Now we have a generation who knows only the sexual definition.

"The phrase is mis-used and offends people of that sexual preference. It's not used in the correct sense," said one student.

## STUN

Douglas Pearson of Lansing, Mich. is stunned by the frequency at which 'stun' or 'stunned' shows up in headlines on sports stories these days. He sent many examples - 'Canucks stun Wings' - and more. The Wings may have been angry, disappointed or, perhaps, frustrated, but probably not stunned. Pearson's stunning conclusion: "The backwards version of stun is nuts."

## SO

Over-used by many in conversation, especially teenagers. 'I am SO not into that.' 'That outfit is SO not you.'

"It's used too much and not in the right context." Lissa Sanchioni, Sudbury, Ont.

## VERBING OF INNOCENT NOUNS

LSSU received many nominations from folks who are disappointed with what seems to be a trend of turning perfectly good nouns into verbs. Some examples include: 'to office' — describing the activity of running an office. Sent in through the Internet by Russell King, who notes, "Someone needs to suffer for it!" 'to dialogue' — "It's not a verb! It makes me want to go home and monologue." Marion Boyer, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. 'to conference' — "I am conferencing with her tomorrow'...What's wrong with 'I am going to have a conference with her?'" Karen Cheadle, English teacher, Dansville H.S., Dansville, Mich. 'to mentor' — Instead of being a mentor, now folks talk about 'mentoring' someone. "Another infamous noun turned verb by creative (lazy) users of English." Hugh Valiant, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

