

45th Annual List Of Banished Words Press Release

Jan. 1, 2020

The wordsmiths at Lake Superior State University have released LSSU's 45th annual List of Words Banished from the Queen's English for Mis-use, Over-use and General Uselessness.

The influencers in the English Department at Lake Superior State University have announced LSSU's 45th annual List of Words Banished from the Queen's English for Misuse, Overuse and General Uselessness.

"These days, 'living your best life' is 'literally' impossible with 'influencers' making us 'totes' 'jelly,'" an LSSU spokesperson 'chirped.' "I mean, the least they could do is watch their words."

OK, boomer.

The Word Banishment tradition, created by the late W. T. Rabe, former public relations director at Lake Superior State University, is now in its fifth decade. For every new year since 1976, LSSU — also known for premier programs in nursing, engineering, robotics, and Great Lakes freshwater research — has issued this list.

Rabe and fellow LSSU faculty and staff came up with the first list of words and phrases that people love to hate at a New Year's Eve party in 1975, publishing it on Jan. 1, 1976. Though he and his friends created the first list from their own pet peeves about language, Rabe said he knew from the volume of mail he received in the following weeks that the group would have no shortage of words and phrases from which to choose for 1977. Since then, the list has consisted entirely of nominations received from around the world throughout the year.

Through the years, LSSU has received tens of thousands of nominations for the list, which now includes more than a thousand entries. This year's list is culled from nominations received mostly through the university's website, lssu.edu/banished. Word-watchers target pet peeves from everyday speech, as well as from the news, fields of education, technology, advertising, politics and more. A committee makes a final cut in December.

Noticeable trends for the past decade show the influx of social media language into our daily lives, with : "tweet," "app," "sexting," and "friend" as a verb being banished. Since 2010, each year has seen additional social media terms appearing on lists: "Facebook" and "Google" as verbs, "selfie," "Twittersphere," "break the internet," and "ghosting" to name a few. Since 2016, a noticeable trend of exhaustion with words rooted in politics and media coverage has emerged: "post-truth," "echochamber," "fake news," and "collusion" appear on the 2017-2019 lists. This latter trend persists in the 2020 list with the most-nominated word: "quid pro quo."

"No quid pro quo was offered during the creation of this meticulously curated list of words," stated Dr. Rodney Hanley, LSSU President, "I mean, literally, this holiday season I'm living my best life and looking forward to all the reactions to this years list."

And now, the 2020 list:

The Most Nominated Word or Phrase for 2020

Quid pro quo: This phrase received the most nominations this year, with a noticeable spike in November (gee, we wonder why...). The popularity of this phrase has the committee wondering what it should offer in exchange for next year's nominations.

Mary Bilyeu, Toledo, OH; Deborah Rempala, Saint Clair Shores, MI; Julie Janiskee, Petoskey, MI; Deanna, Sault Ste Marie, MI; Jeff Lewis, Ada, MI; Lisa K Farrell, Los Angeles, CA; Tana Baldwin, Petoskey, MI; Trudy Salo, Liberty Twp, OH; Tom Reilly, Bloomfield Twp, MI; Jeff Malcolm, Paw Paw, MI; Daniel Muldoon, Council Bluffs, IA; Kate TerHaar, Cedarville, MI; Mary J., Houston, TX; Lori Moore, Kalamazoo, MI; Steve Carr, Marquette, MI; R. Osinski, Clinton Twp., MI; Dan Berardi, Arnprior, Ontario, Canada.

Words that Attempt to Make Something More than It Is

Artisanal: One nominator described this word as an "obfuscation," describing an "actual person doing something personal for another unknown person." The committee agrees this word should be banned for well water... but not for sandwiches.

Nkenge Zola, Highland Park, MI; Bill McCune, Petoskey, MI

Curated: Like “artisanal,” this seems to be another attempt at making something more than it is, especially when used in reference to social media (or Banished Words Lists). As Barb from Ann Arbor says, “Save it for the museum.”

Barb, Ann Arbor, MI; Nkenge Zola, Highland Park, MI; Jerry Purdy, Portage, MI; and Samurel Press, Burlington, VT

Influencer: According to Urban Dictionary, “A word Instagram users use to describe themselves to make them feel famous and more important when no one really know who they are or care.”

Sylvia Gurinsky, Davie, FL; Jeff Lewis, Ada, MI; Paul Bartunek, Los Angeles, CA; Jacqueline Reardon, Burlington, NJ; diva_angel360

Words Banished for Pretentiousness or Imprecision

Literally: Surprisingly, this word hasn’t already been banished, but here it is, one of the few words in English that has begun to serve as its own antonym. Many of the nominators cite this word’s use for figurative expressions or emphasis, which is literally annoying.

Edward, Glendale, AZ; Ryan Chenier, Grand Rapids, MI; Daniel Kirk, San Luis Obispo, CA; Dale Martin, Novi, MI; Jack Pollard, Haslett, MI; Gary Wenger, Delta, BC, Canada; Christy Borthick, Nashville, TN; Pamela Naylor, Dover, DE; Jamie Rankin, Connellsville, PA; Margaret, Los Angeles, CA; and Jennifer W Berlin, Anthem, AZ

I mean: It’s easy to see why this phrase was nominated, right? I mean...

John Leask, Alpena, MI

Living my best life: The committee very much enjoys exercising its authority in banishing words annually—literally the capstone of our year—but as Eric says, apart from reincarnation, are there “options for multiple lives”?

Gary Wheelock, Wixom, MI; Eric Park, Rock Hill, SC

Mouthfeel: A word used by foodies to describe the texture of food or drink in the mouth, which the committee feels should be banished entirely from food reality TV shows. As our nominator asks, “Where else, exactly, would you like to touch your food or beverage?” This one just doesn’t feel right in the mouth.

Jodi Miller, Gahanna, OH

Those Darn Millennials!

Chirp: This one is a new insult for the non-millennials on the committee. Before we get chirped for being out of touch, as our nominator suggests, why don’t we leave it to the birds?

Abigail Ostman, Sault Ste Marie, MI

Jelly: An abbreviation of “jealous,” the committee agrees with the nominator of this word who suggested that it’s better left for toast.

Mike Bassarab, Kalamazoo, MI

Totes: Another abbreviation, this time of “totally.” Totes overused.

Samantha Stuart, Walker, MI

Vibe / vibe check: A new use of the 60s term, “good vibes.” This one just doesn’t vibe with us anymore, unless the speaker is actually vibrating.

Leah Mockridge, Sault Ste Marie, MI and Carissa, Sault Ste Marie, MI

OK, Boomer: This phrase caught on late this year on the Internet as a response from millennials to the older generation. Boomers may remember, however, that generational tension is always present. In fact, it was the Boomers who gave us the declaration: "Don't trust anyone over 30!"

Curtis McDonald, Shelby Township, MI; Scott Eldridge, Kalamazoo, MI; and Devin Greaney, Cordova, TN