



LAKE SUPERIOR STATE UNIVERSITY

For Immediate Release

Dec. 31, 2022

We Kid You Not: GOAT Tops Inflection Point, Quiet Quitting, and Gaslighting As Greatest of All Time Words and Terms That Lake Superior State University Banishes for 2023

Sault Ste. Marie, MI — Stop resorting to imprecise, trite, and meaningless words and terms of seeming convenience! You're taking the lazy way out and only confusing matters by over-relying on inexact, stale, and inane communication!

Language monitors across the country and around the world decried the decrepitude and futility of basic methods to impart information in their mock-serious entries for Lake Superior State University's annual tongue-in-cheek Banished Words List. LSSU announces the results of the yearly compendium on Dec. 31 to start the New Year on the right foot, er, tongue.

The vast majority of the 1,500-plus nominations of words and terms for banishment for misuse, overuse, and uselessness for 2023 reveled and wallowed in the erosion of fundamental expression.

Ranked No. 1 as the best of the worst: GOAT, acronym for Greatest of All Time. The many nominators didn't have to be physicists or grammarians to determine the literal impossibility and technical vagueness of this wannabe superlative. Yet it's bestowed on everyone from Olympic gold medalists to *Jeopardy!* champions, as one muckraker playfully deplored. Meanwhile, other naysayers remarked on social media posts that brandish a photo of, for instance, multiple cricket players or soccer stars with a caption about several GOATs in one frame.

"Words and terms matter. Or at least they should. Especially those that stem from the casual or causal. That's what nominators near and far noticed, and our contest judges from the LSSU School of Arts and Letters agreed," said Peter Szatmary, executive director of marketing and communications at Lake State.

"They veritably bleated their disapproval about the attempted nonpareil of GOAT because the supposed designation becomes an actual misnomer. The singularity of 'greatest of all time' cannot happen, no way, no how. And instead of being selectively administered, it's readily conferred. Remember Groucho Marx's line about not wanting to join a club that would accept him as member?

"The nine additional words and terms banished for 2023—from new no-nos 'inflection point' at No. 2 and 'gaslighting' at No. 4 to repeat offenders 'amazing' at No. 6 and 'It is what it is' at No. 10—also fall somewhere on the spectrum between specious and tired. They're empty as balderdash or diluted through oversaturation. Be careful—be more careful—with buzzwords and jargon."

LSSU has compiled an annual Banished Words List since 1976, and later copyrighted the concept, to uphold, protect, and support excellence in language by encouraging avoidance of words and terms that are overworked, redundant, oxymoronic, clichéd, illogical, nonsensical—and otherwise ineffective, baffling, or irritating.

Over the decades, Lake State has received tens of thousands of nominations for the list, which now totals more than 1,000 entries. Examples of the winners (or should that be losers?) to make the yearly compilation: “detente,” “surely,” “classic,” “bromance,” and “COVID-19,” plus “wrap my head around,” “user friendly,” “at this point in time,” “not so much,” and “viable alternative.” The Banished Words List has become such a cultural phenomenon that comedian George Carlin submitted an entry that made the annals in 1994: “baddaboom, baddabing.”

This year, nominations came from most major U.S. cities and many U.S. states, plus Australia, New Zealand, France, Italy, Portugal, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Czech Republic, India, China, Namibia, South Africa, Nigeria, American Samoa, Malaysia, the British Virgin Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and throughout Canada.

Here are the list of the banished words and terms for 2023 and the reasons for their banishment:

1. GOAT

The acronym for Greatest of All Time gets the goat of petitioners and judges for overuse, misuse, and uselessness. “Applied to everyone and everything from athletes to chicken wings,” an objector declared. “How can anyone or anything be the GOAT, anyway?” Records fall; time continues. Some sprinkle GOAT like table salt on “anyone who’s really good.” Another wordsmith: ironically, “goat” once suggested something unsuccessful; now, GOAT is an indiscriminate flaunt.

2. Inflection point

Mathematical term that entered everyday parlance and lost its original meaning. This year’s version of “pivot,” banished in 2021. “Chronic throat-clearing from historians, journalists, scientists, or politicians. Its ubiquity has driven me to an inflection point of throwing soft objects about whenever I hear it,” a quipster recounted. “Inflection point has reached its saturation point and point of departure,” proclaimed another. “Pretentious way to say turning point.” Overuse and misuse.

3. Quiet quitting

Trendy but inaccurate. Not an employee who inconspicuously resigns. Instead, an employee who completes the minimum requirements for a position. Some nominator reasons: “normal job performance,” “fancy way of saying ‘work to rule,’” “nothing more than companies complaining about workers refusing to be exploited,” “it’s not a new phenomenon; it’s burnout, ennui, boredom, disengagement.” On the precipice for next year’s Banished Words List as well for ongoing misuse and overuse.

4. Gaslighting

Nominators are not crazy by arguing that overuse disconnects the term from the real concern it has identified in the past: dangerous psychological manipulation that causes victims to distrust their thoughts, feelings, memories, or perception of reality. Others cited misuse: an incorrect catchall to refer generally to conflict or disagreement. It’s too obscure of a reference to begin with, avowed sundry critics, alluding to the 1938 play and 1940/44 movies.

5. Moving forward

Misuse, overuse, and uselessness. “Where else would we go?” wondered a sage—since we can’t, in fact, travel backward in time. “May also refer to ‘get my way,’ as in, ‘How can we move forward?’ Well, guess what? Sometimes you can’t,” another wit stated. Politicians and bosses often wield it for “semantic legitimacy” of self-interest, evasion, or disingenuousness. Its next of kin, “going forward,” banished in 2001, also received votes.

6. Amazing

“Not everything is amazing; and when you think about it, very little is,” a dissenter explained. “This glorious word should be reserved for that which is dazzling, moving, or awe-inspiring,” to paraphrase another, “like the divine face of a newborn.” Initially banished for misuse, overuse, and uselessness in 2012. Its cyclical return mandates further nixing of the “generic,” “banal and hollow” modifier—a “worn-out adjective from people short on vocabulary.”

7. Does that make sense?

Submitters rejected the desire, perhaps demand, for clarification or affirmation as filler, insecurity, and passive aggression. “Why say it, if you must ask? It just doesn’t make sense!” tsk-tsked one. In this call for reassurance or act of false modesty, enquirers warp respondents into “co-conspirators,” deduced another. Needy, scheming, and/or cynical. Let me be clear, judges opined: Always make sense; don’t think aloud or play games! Misuse, overuse, and uselessness.

8. Irregardless

Sleuth confession: “It makes my hair hurt.” As well it should—because it’s not a word. At most, it’s a nonstandard word, per some dictionaries. “Regardless” suffices. Opponents disqualified it as a double negative. One conveyed that the prefix “ir” + “regardless” = redundancy. “Take ‘regardless’ and dress it up for emphasis, showcasing your command of nonexistent words,” excoriated an exasperated correspondent, adding, “Why isn’t this on your list?” Misuse.

9. Absolutely

Banished in 1996, but deserves a repeat nope given its overuse. Usurped the simple “yes,” laments a contributor. Another condemned it as “the current default to express agreement, endemically present on TV in one-on-one interviews.” Frequently “said too loudly by annoying people who think they’re better than you,” bemoaned an aggrieved observer. “Sounds like it comes with a guarantee when that may not be the case,” cautioned a wary watchdog.

10. It is what it is

Banished in 2008 for overuse, misuse, and uselessness: “pointless,” “cop-out,” “Only Yogi Berra should be allowed to utter such a circumlocution.” Its resurgence prompted these insights: “Well, duh.” “No kidding.” “Of course it is what it is! What else would it be? It would be weird if it wasn’t what it wasn’t.” “Tautology.” “Adds no value.” “Verbal crutch.” “Excuse not to deal with reality or accept responsibility.” “Dismissive, borderline rude.”

“Our linguists, editors, and philosophers, comics, gatekeepers, and pundits didn’t succumb to quiet quitting when laboring over rife miscommunication. Rather, they turned in discerning opinions about rampant verbal and written blunders with equal parts amusement, despair, and outrage. But our nominators insisted, and our Arts and Letters faculty judges concurred, that to decree the Banished Words List 2023 as the GOAT is tantamount to gaslighting. Does that make sense?” said LSSU President

Dr. Rodney S. Hanley. “Irregardless, moving forward, it is what it is: an absolutely amazing inflection point of purposeless and ineptitude that overtakes so many mouths and fingers.”

For more about the Banished Words List and to nominate a word or term for banishment for 2024, go online to lssu.edu/banishedwords.

About Lake Superior State University: Lake Superior State University is one of Michigan’s most affordable public universities with One-Rate at Lake State tuition for all. Surrounded by three Great Lakes, LSSU is an unsurpassed location for research, innovation, and real-world experiences. Signature programs include fisheries and wildlife management, engineering, nursing, criminal justice, business, robotics engineering, fire science, and kinesiology. In 2019, Lake State launched the first cannabis chemistry program in the nation. LSSU also was the first campus nationwide to offer an accredited four-year fire science program; it is one of three in the U.S. LSSU was the first campus nationwide to offer an accredited four-year robotics engineering technology program and is the only university nationwide to offer undergraduate education in industrial robotics. LSSU also offers several certificate programs. Regional centers are in Escanaba, Iron Mountain, and Petoskey. LSSU opened its newest location in St. Helen in 2020. Additional LSSU hallmarks include the annual Banished Words List that receives worldwide media coverage and a student-run Atlantic salmon hatchery at its renowned Center for Freshwater Research and Education. LSSU’s NCAA Division I hockey team has won five national championships; men compete in five other sports and women in six at the Division II level. Lake State was founded in 1946 in Sault Ste. Marie, the oldest city in Michigan (1668), on the site of the former U.S. Army’s Fort Brady. Lake State has approximately 2,000 undergraduate students, with 88 percent coming from Michigan, and with every county represented. Ninety percent of full-time students receive financial aid.

###