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Lake Superior State University Announces 50th Annual Banished Words List



SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. – It’s time for a golden anniversary. Celebrating five decades of linguistic commentary, Lake Superior State University (LSSU) presents the **50th annual Banished Words List**, a tradition highlighting the importance and evolution of language.

What began as a whimsical New Year’s Eve party idea in 1976, has grown into a global reflection on the words that wear out their welcome. Since former public relations director W.T. (Bill) Rabe showcased the first “List of Words Banished from the Queen’s English because of mis-, mal-, over-use, or general uselessness,” LSSU has carried the torch.

The entries continue a tongue-in-cheek commentary on language, catchphrases, and corporate jargon. Over 1,400 submissions were entrusted to LSSU this year, pouring in from all 50 U.S. states, and as far as Uzbekistan, Brazil, Japan, the United Kingdom, and many more.

Here are this year’s golden class of banishments and rationale:

1. **6-7 (six seven):** “There are six or seven reasons why this phrase needs to be stopped,” says Paul E. from WI. The volume of submissions for this one could have taken up the whole list, at least slots 6-7. The top banishment this year, Scott T. from UT adds, “it’s time for “6-7” to be 86’ed.”
2. **Demure:** “It’s very *said* more than very *done*, and we’re all very *done* hearing it!” remarks Tammy S. Often used in the phrase ‘very demure, very mindful,’ Madison C. shares that the overuse “waters down the real meaning.”

3. **Cooked:** “Hearing it...my brain feels ‘cooked,’” groans Zac A. from VA. Parents and guardians led the charge on this one, with some feeling this isn’t enough. James C. from WA suggests a ban of “all forms of the word cook,” hoping that hearing them will become rare.
4. **Massive:** “Way overused! (often incorrectly),” exclaim Don and Gail K. from MN. This word’s massive overuse has secured its place on this year’s list.
5. **Incentivize:** In the longstanding effort to turn nouns into verbs, this is another culprit. Two separate submissions likened hearing this word to “nails on a chalkboard.” Patricia from TX asks, “What’s wrong with *motivate*?”
6. **Full stop:** “For the same reason ‘period’ was banished...redundant punctuation,” explains Marybeth A. from OR.
7. **Perfect:** “There are very few instances when the word actually applies,” notes Jo H. from CA. Often heard during customer service interactions, Char S. from OH wonders: “How do they know it’s perfect...what does that mean?”
8. **Gift/gifted (as a verb):** “I found this on the 1994 list, but it will make me feel better to recommend that it be included once again,” reveals James S. from OK. Another case of a noun being used as a verb.
9. **My Bad:** In the 1998 banishment, Elizabeth P. from MI suggested, “students and adults sound infantile when using this to apologize.” The phrase hasn’t matured in credibility since then. Andrea R. from OH shared, “It does not convey much meaning in the way of an apology.”
10. **Reach Out:** First banished in 1994, this saying has strayed from the positive message it once intended to deliver. “What started as a phrase with emotional support overtones has now become absurdly overused,” asserts Kevin B. from the United Kingdom.

That concludes this year’s banishments. However, 50 years of lists have shown one thing: sometimes one placement just isn’t enough. To commemorate this golden milestone, LSSU looks back at some “Repeat Offenders” that received multiple banishments.

Repeat Offenders: Words That Refused to Stay Banished

1. **Absolutely (1996, 2023):** A favorite nomination of WXYT listeners in 1996. That proved not to be enough. A 2023 submission called the word “The current default to express agreement.” Will it try for a hat-trick? Absolutely.
2. **At the End of the Day (1999, 2022, 2024):** In 1999, Mike M. said the phrase was used by “political pundits,” while Randall H. attributed it to “Hollywood types.” This phrase has the unique distinction of triple-banishment.
3. **Awesome (1984, 2007):** Elnora V. set the tone for the initial banishment, sharing “I find it preposterous to believe that all these writers are observing truly awesome events on such a widespread scale.” It returned to the list in 2007, with folks from as far as Thailand calling it “overused and meaningless.”
4. **Game Changer (2009, 2025):** The 2009 banishment quoted Cynthia saying, “It’s game OVER for this cliché, which gets overused in the news media, political arenas and in business.” This “game over” would include another banishment in 2025, with Patrick from Washington, DC commenting, “nothing is a game changer if everything is a game changer.”

5. **Hot Water Heater (1982, 2018):** An anonymous listener nominated this phrase to Rob Westaby with WOWO Radio in 1982, asking “Since when does hot water need to be heated?” Decades later, the 2018 banishment reminded folks that a “water heater” would keep them out of linguistic hot water.

For half a century, the Banished Words List has served as a reminder that language is always evolving. Lake Superior State University remains grateful to the thousands of participants who share their linguistic frustrations year after year to keep this tradition alive.

To nominate a word or phrase for 2027, or for more information on the tradition, visit:
www.lssu.edu/traditions/banishedwords.

About Lake Superior State University

Lake Superior State University is a close-knit university in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula where many faculty and staff know students by name. Founded in 1946, LSSU offers a unique personal education shaped by its size, setting, and spirit of community. The University’s one-rate tuition seeks to make education accessible to all students. Learn more at www.lssu.edu.

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