

By ANNE DONNELL

How are new words added to our vocabularies? I know this is happening a lot, but I'm curious about what the process is or even if there is a process.

-Using Words I Didn't Know Existed When I Was A Child

That signature above needs to be left alone; those of us with mostly no TV childhoods were able to grow up without knowing about the existence of a lot of words, mostly X-rated ones. (X-rated itself is meaningless before the movie standards were adopted; the original ones went in use in late 1968.)

There is not a process for adding new words; there are many, many, many. Sometimes a famous creative person hammers away at words (think Shakespeare), chipping and shaping until new ones appear. Sometimes an anonymous creative person pops out a new word (think advertising copy writers of this century and last), and this word sticks. Sometimes high school students open their mouths and out comes something never heard before, maybe jitterbug, maybe Tweeeterbug.

And there's brand names we've added without a qualm. Who says "facial tissue" when Kleenex© works, we think, so much better?

If you've avoided using computers you've missed a slew of newness, continually invented.

From *Language Study @Suite 101* (online) in an article "From Slanguage to Language" by Deborah S. Hildebrand, dated January 12, 2011, the writer gives us "25 Favorite New Word Entries." She uses phrases, also, in the listing. Traditional grammar recognizes that phrases often function in exactly the same way as single words.

"Some of these words have actually been in the English language for a while; however, perhaps their cult status kept them from being fully embraced – until now. □ *Buzzkill* (n): Person or thing

that has a depressing effect. □

Catastrophize

(v): To present a situation as worse than it is. □

Cheeseball

(adj) Lacking style or taste; sometimes used as a noun to describe a person, "You're such a cheeseball." □

Chillax

(v): To calm down and relax. □

Cougar

(n): Older woman who dates younger men. □

Exit

strategy

(n): Planned means of removing oneself from a situation. □

Frenemy

(n): An enemy disguised as a friend. □

Green

-

collar

(adj): Of, relating to, or involving actions for protecting the natural environment. □

Hater

(n): Negative person; someone who expresses their extreme hostility. □

Heart

(v): To like or love very much. □

LBD

(n): Little black dress; the one every woman needs. □

Locavore

(n): A person who primarily eats locally grown food. □

Matchy

-

matchy

(adj): Excessively color-coordinated. □

Meme

(n): Image, video or phrase passed electronically on the Internet. □

Overleveraged

(adj): Having taken on too much debt. □

Riff

(v): To wax on extensively on a particular subject. □

Rock

(v) To do something in a very confident way. □

Sheeple

(n): Unquestioning followers (a combination of people and sheep). □

Social

media

(n): Websites and applications used for social networking. □

Soft

skills

(n): Opposite of hard skills; attributes that are not learned □

Staycation

(n): A vacation spent at home or nearby. □

Truthiness

(n): Quality of seeming true. □

Tweet

(n): Posting made on the social networking site Twitter. □

Unfriend

(v): To remove someone from a list of personal associates on a social networking site. □

Webisode

(n): Episode made specifically for online viewing.

“There are definitely other new words that have crept into the English language over the last few years, such as viral and zombie bank. And though these 25 are some of the most frequently used, they’re definitely not the last.”

Tracing the origin of any word or phrase is a tricky business, even words coined centuries ago. Nothing is too straight forward about human words and ways. Here’s a new (maybe) political word (maybe) with some bias showing: “ineptocracy (in-ep-toc'-ra-cy) - a system of government where the least capable to lead are elected by the least capable of producing, and where the members of society least likely to sustain themselves or succeed, are rewarded with goods and services paid for by the confiscated wealth of a diminishing number of producers.” Well, ouch, folks!

ONLINE DEPARTMENT “How to Install A Southern Style Home Security System” (Thanks, P.W.) 1. Go to Goodwill and buy a pair of size 14-16 men's work boots. 2. Place them on your front porch, along with a copy of *Guns & Ammo Magazine*. 3. Put four giant dog dishes next to the boots and magazine. 4. Leave a note on your door that reads: Bubba, Me and Marcel, Virgil, Ernest Ray Junior, T-Bone and Jimmy Earl went for more ammo and a few gallons of sweet tea. Be back in an hour. Don't mess with the pit bulls. They got the mailman this morning and tore him up bad. I don't think Killer took part, but it was hard to tell from all the blood. Anyway, I locked all four of 'em in the house. Better wait outside. Be right back. - Cooter

MORE ONLINE (Thanks, L.D.) □ *A man tells his doctor that he's incapable of doing all the things around the house that he used to do. When the examination is over, he says, “Okay, Doctor. In plain English—what’s wrong with me?” “Well, in plain English,” says the doctor, “you’re just lazy.” The man nods. “Now give me the medical term so I can tell my wife.” □ Seeing her friend Sally wearing a new locket, Meg asks if there is a memento of some sort inside.*

“Yes,” says Sally, “a lock of my husband’s hair.” “But Larry’s still alive.” “I know, but his hair is gone.” □ I was diagnosed with antisocial behavior disorder, so I joined a support group. We never meet. □ A man tells his doctor, “Doc, help me. I’m addicted to Twitter!” The doctor replies, “Sorry, I don’t follow you ...” □ The elevator in our building malfunctioned one day, leaving several of us stranded. Seeing a sign that listed two emergency phone numbers, I dialed the first and explained our situation. After what seemed to be a very long silence, the voice on the other end said, “I don’t know what you expect me to do for you; I’m a psychologist.” “A psychologist?” I replied. “Your phone is listed here as an emergency number. Can’t you help us?” “Well,” he finally responded in a measured tone. “How do you feel about being stuck in an elevator?”