

# Say it ~~Write~~ ~~Rite~~ Right

*Savvy Sentences and  
Wonderful Words*



The Speaking, Reading, and Writing Center

## Say it Right

Say what you mean and mean what you say, and that way, nobody gets hurt...

Save yourself from:

- potential humiliation
- poor grades
- Social media hazing

Polish up your sentences and make masterful vocabulary choices with this helpful review...



# Say it Right

1. Can the colloquialisms & skip the slang
2. Note denotation and connotation
3. Use a dictionary more and a thesaurus less
4. Thoroughly review for spelling, grammar, and tricky word choice errors

Attention Katy Perry. It's 'The One WHO Got Away' not 'The One THAT Got Away.'

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# Colloquialisms

Colloquialisms are informal words and expressions that work well in conversation, but not academic writing, like:

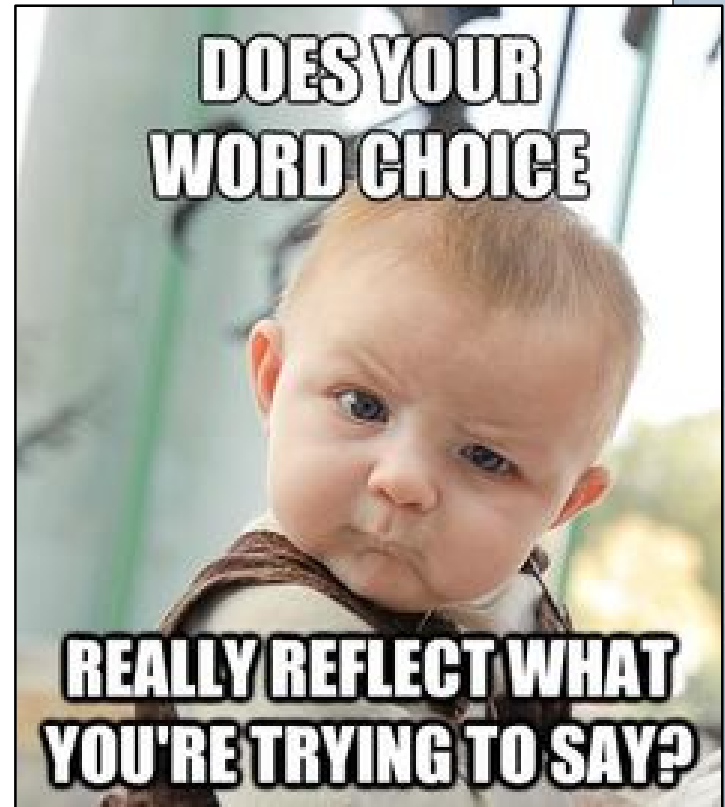
That's the way the cookie crumbles.  
I wasn't born yesterday.  
He's a penny pincher.  
She's older than dirt.

**The following use of colloquialisms would NOT be appropriate for most essays:**

"The main character of the story was an honorable man, and the heroine hated to see his name **run through the wringer** like that. But, **that's the way the cookie crumbles.**"

**Instead, write this:**

"The main character of the story was an honorable man, and the heroine hated to see his name **defamed in the meritless accusations**. But unfortunately, **life is not always fair** when one has no money or social standing."



# Slang

**Slang** is another form of informal language, and it can also include things like 'text-talk' or misused forms of words.

**It may work for Facebook, but not for homework:**

- Follow standard capitalization and spelling rules.
- Do not use emoticons like ☺ or ☹ in the text of assignments or digital correspondence, unless an instructor has specifically given you permission.
- Generally, cursing is not appropriate in academic writing. (In some narrative it may be appropriate—check with your instructor if you are not sure).



## Denotation/Connotation

Words have both a **denotation** (literal meaning) and **connotation** (associated meaning). Things get tricky because connotations can be very subtle or nuanced, making it easy to use a word incorrectly or misinterpret what was **meant** by what was said. Irony and sarcasm can also come into play, as seen below:





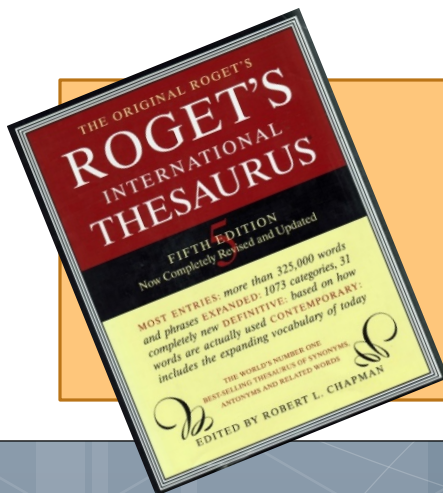
## Denotation & Connotation

Be careful when choosing your words that you are considering both denotations and connotation...

"Some people are set in their opinions, a quality that can be described *positively* as **persistent, firm, and steadfast**, or *negatively* as **stubborn, bull-headed, and close-minded**" (Faigley 173).

She was persistent in defending academic freedom.

She was close-minded when it came to tenure.



The overuse or careless use of a thesaurus can lead writers into conflicts of understanding with denotation and connotation...

## Wrong Word Choice

Relying on a thesaurus can also result in a wrong word choice when words have slightly nuanced meanings, or connotations.





## Dictionary & Thesaurus

Overreliance on the **thesaurus** often leads to writers choosing words without fully understanding their **connotation**.

Instead, writers should spend more time working with **dictionaries** to be sure they fully understand all word choices.

Before substituting a thesaurus word for your own, look it up in the dictionary to be certain of all possible nuances of meaning...



**Thesaurus.**

## Dictionary & Thesaurus

Sometimes students try too hard to sound academic in their writing, but end up producing confusing text.

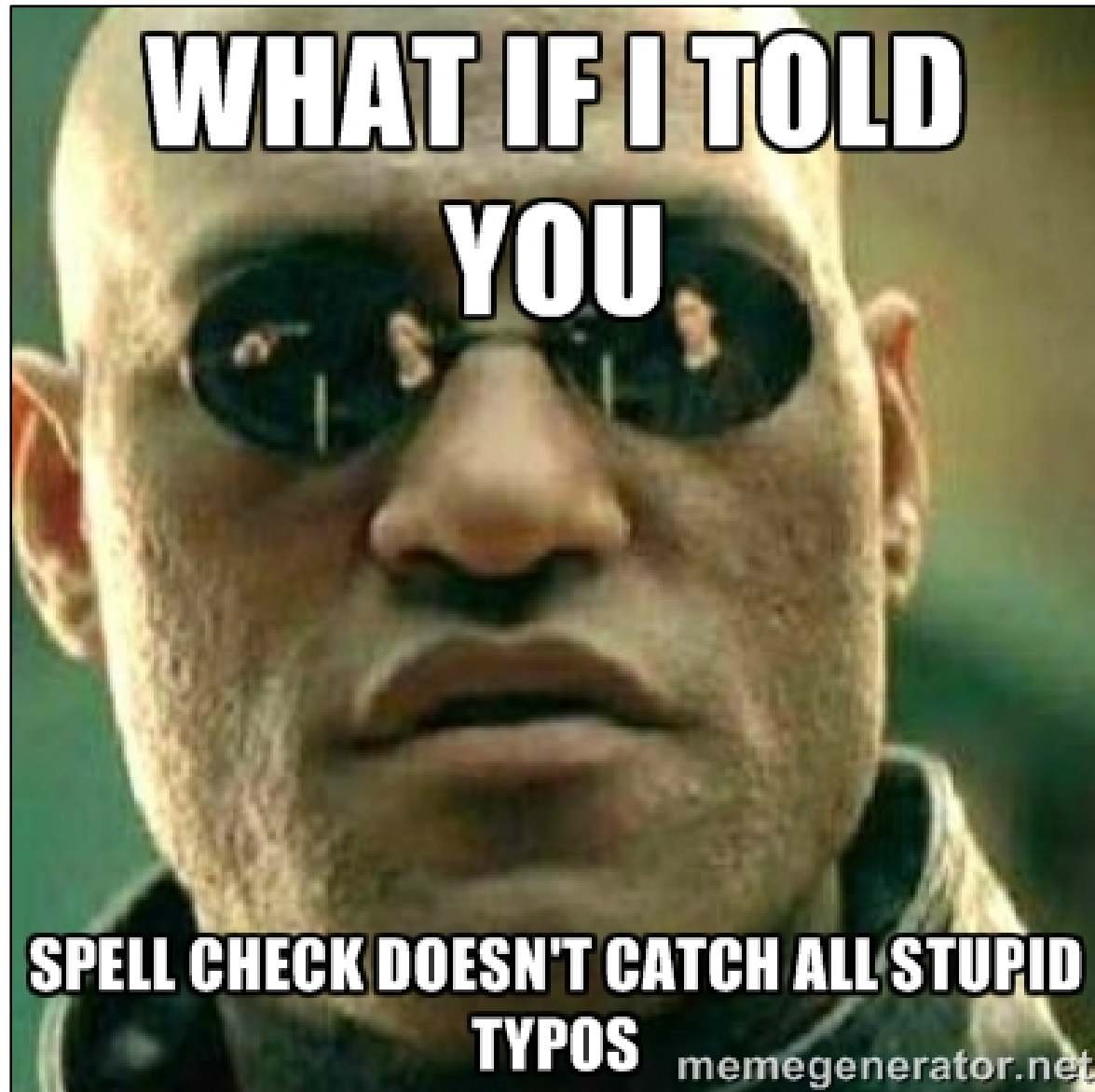
- ❖ Focus on simplicity first.
- ❖ Don't use language or terms that you can't define in your own words.
- ❖ And most importantly, let your voice shine; don't try to mimic the voice of other writers.



**PRESENTING A COMMON  
COLLOQUIALISM OR VERSE FROM A  
CONTEMPORARY WORDSMITH**

**EMBELLISHED IN A LOQUACIOUS  
MANNER IN COMBINATION WITH  
MY RESEMBLANCE TO A  
FASHIONABLE FLESH-PEDDLER  
ENSUES IN HILARITY**

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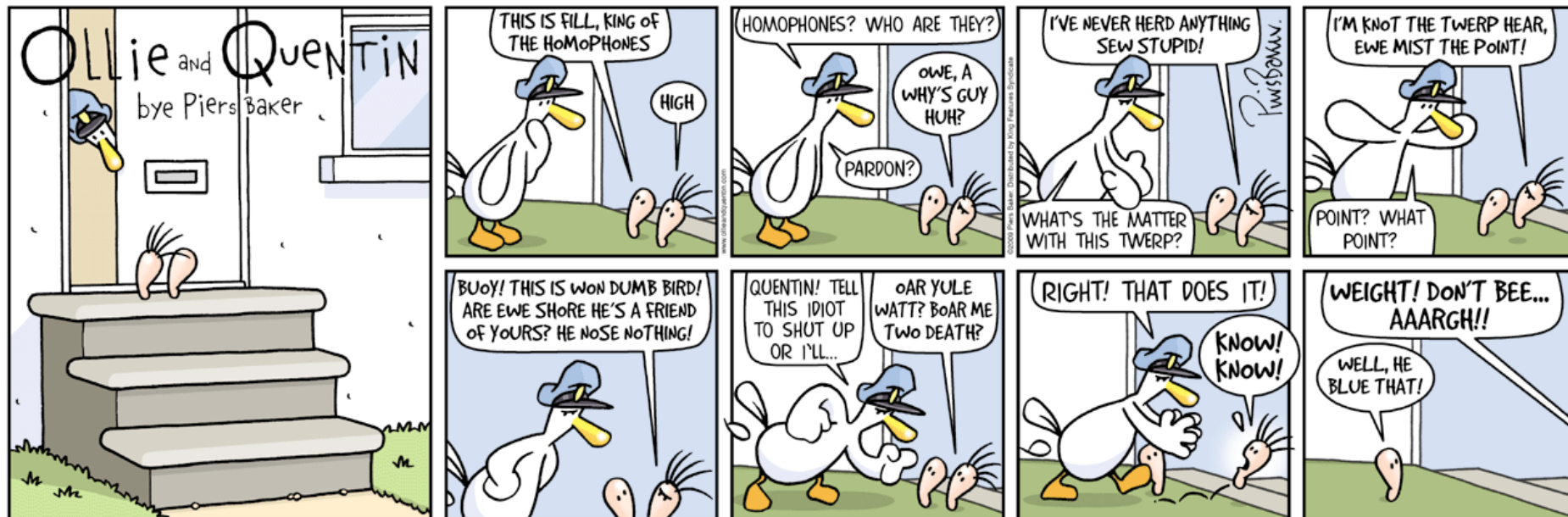
## Close Editing

Careless mistakes happen often and easily, which is why writers should always edit closely for spelling, grammar, and word choice errors—even the professionals can miss one now and then...



# Close Editing

Even the spell-checking software in MS Word can make mistakes (and often does) because it does not consider differences in connotation or homophones.





# Word Choice

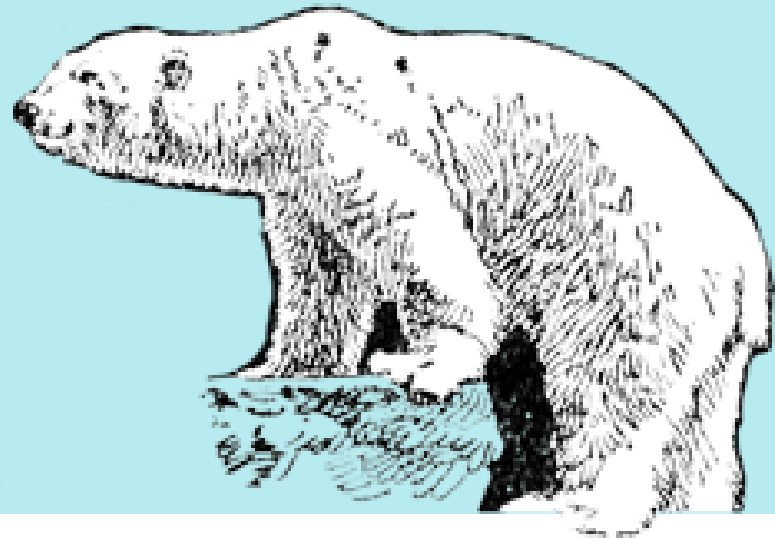
Correctly spelled words can still be an absolutely incorrect choice for your sentence...

"Bear with me" requests patience.

"Bare with me" requests that you get naked with me.

Good to know.

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Correctly spelled words can still be an absolutely incorrect choice for your sentence...



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