

New words spoiling the language

by MARK PAVILONS

There are more than one million distinct words in the English language. Most of use only 25,000 words on a regular basis.

And yet, we keep adding to the list and making our trusty dictionaries that much larger.

There are a few that make me cringe, every time I hear or read them.

Currently, many people have a 'side hustle,' meaning a part-time job or extra way to make money. But to me, this term has a negative connotation and 'hustle' has always meant a way to deceive someone.

When our workers improve, they are 'upskilling,' or 'reskilling' not to be confused with plain, old getting better.

'Gaslighting' comes from the younger generation, and is a form of psychological manipulation in which the abuser attempts to sow self-doubt and confusion in their victim's mind. Typically, gaslighters are seeking to gain power and control over the other person, by distorting reality and forcing them to question their own judgment and intuition.

In business or government we hear the term 'high level,' meaning senior, top, highest, central, chief, main. Wow, I guess the term 'upper management' is now really old. By the way, it also means 'relating to or being nuclear waste that contains highly concentrated radioactive components which are environmentally hazardous.'

The Oxford Dictionary has added some interesting new words in recent years.

There's 'porch pirate,' referring to a person who steals parcels that have been delivered and left unattended outside the recipient's home or business. I suppose plain old thief doesn't cut it.

And there's 'textspeak,' gutting the language in favour of time-saving abbreviations, acronyms, emoticons or emojis, etc.

Miriam Webster added almost 700 new words to date.

While often used in sports, GOAT (Greatest of All Time) is one I can't get used to. Just who falls into this category, other than Muhammad Ali?

In my wheelhouse is UPA (Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon), which replaces UFO. I assume the powers that be wanted to remove the stigma of 'flying saucers' to encompass anything weird in the skies above.

How about 'rewild,' meaning to return to a more natural or wild state? Isn't that just nature?

You can't just make a new word by adding 're' to it.

I'm sure some of us have a 'screenager,' a teenager who is always using a computer, mobile devices or video game console.

For those of us who are often browsing the Internet, we run into 'doomscroll,' to spend excessive time online scrolling through news or other content that makes one feel sad, anxious, angry, etc.

Most of us have an opinion about carbon taxes and our carbon footprint. But what about 'carbon capture and storage'? These refer to various methods of removing and storing carbon dioxide produced by industrial processes to keep it from entering the

atmosphere.

I just love the word "nomophobia," meaning the fear or worry at the idea of being without your mobile phone or being unable to use it.

We've all been there. I have occasionally lost mine in the couch cushions or misplaced it somewhere in the house. Even calling it doesn't always work, especially if your phone is on silent.

I can't believe that in less than a decade, we've become so tied to this small but mighty gizmo that we just can't live without it. We no longer have a house phone and I know many people who use their phone for personal and business use. It's a constant companion.

Mine froze last week and I had to take it to the Apple Store. I was lost, all alone and without purpose, not having my phone for a few days. It was like going through withdrawal.

Some people may be in a "situationship" more than friends but less than a couple. That's what we needed, even more ways to confuse the complicated relationships between couples.

One word I have come to love is "hangry," when a person becomes bad-tempered or irritable as a result of hunger. I use it a lot, especially when referring to our youngest child, who never finds anything to eat!

There have been times when I have been guilty of binge-watching TV series, making them "bingeable." I couldn't get enough of every episode of Restaurant Impossible and was saddened to hear of its demise. I now have Kitchen Nightmares. My wife and I binged every episode of Alone we could find.

The word "bingeable" started gaining popularity when more people began streaming more TV shows and series online. Usually used to describe Netflix shows, it can also refer to old shows that you can finish after a day or two of watching non-stop.

Thanks to modern science we now have "Frankenfood," used to refer to genetically engineered food. It was actually coined in 1992. The modern definition of this word relates to food fusion and unusual recipes like ramen burger and spam sushi.

My friends, I encourage you to be on the lookout for new and exciting words. And be weary of the weird ones. Say "no" to language abuse!