

American Dialect Society

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***“Plutoed”* Voted 2006 Word of the Year by American Dialect Society**

In its 17th annual words of the year vote, the American Dialect Society voted *“plutoed”* as the word of the year, in a run-off against *climate canary*. To *pluto* is to demote or devalue someone or something, as happened to the former planet Pluto when the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union decided Pluto no longer met its definition of a planet.

Presiding at the Jan. 5 voting session were ADS Executive Secretary Allan Metcalf of McMurray College and Professor Wayne Glowka of Georgia College and State University, chair of the New Words Committee of the American Dialect Society. He conducts the column “Among the New Words” in the society’s quarterly journal *American Speech*.

“It was good that the society focused on a genuine scientific concern,” Professor Glowka said. “Though I believe the nomination came in from outer space.”

Word of the Year is interpreted in its broader sense as “vocabulary item”—not just words but phrases. The words or phrases do not have to be brand new, but they have to be newly prominent or notable in the past year, in the manner of *Time* magazine’s Person of the Year. The vote is fully informed by the members’ expertise in the study of words, but it is far from a solemn occasion. Members in the 117-year-old organization include linguists, lexicographers, etymologists, grammarians, historians, researchers, writers, authors, editors, professors, university students, and independent scholars. In conducting the vote, they act in fun and not in any official capacity of inducting words into the English language.

In a companion vote, sibling organization the American Name Society voted Pluto as Name of the Year for 2006 in its third annual name-of-the-year contest. ANS President Cleveland Evans said, “Our members believe the great emotional reaction of the public to the demotion of Pluto shows the importance of Pluto as a name. We may no longer believe in the

Roman god Pluto, but we still have a sense of personal connection with the former planet.”
Macaca was runner-up.

ADS VOTE TALLIES

The number after each nomination is the number of votes it received. Voting totals are for each category are not identical because the number of voters changed for each category.

Word of the Year

WINNER: to pluto/be plutoed: to demote or devalue someone or something, as happened to the former planet Pluto when the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union decided Pluto no longer met its definition of a planet.

RUN-OFF: to be **plutoed**/to pluto 57; climate canary 43.

murse: man’s purse. 0

surge: increase in troops. 4

climate canary: first vote 16

prohibited liquids: fluids that cannot be transported by passengers on airplanes; “bodily excretions of a disgusting nature.” 15

flog: a blog that flacks product. 4

YouTube: 12

to be **plutoed**, to pluto 47

macaca/macaca moment: 13

Most Useful

WINNER climate canary: an organism or species whose poor health or declining numbers hint at a larger environmental catastrophe on the horizon. 50

data Valdez: an accidental release of a large quantity of private or privileged information. Named after the 1989 oil spill by the *Exxon Valdez* in Prince William Sound, Alaska. 21

flog: a fake blog created by a corporation to promote a product or a television show. 13

sharrow: an arrow-like design painted on a roadway to mark a bicycling route. 2

boomeritis: afflictions or injuries of Baby Boomers, caused by their age. 11

Most Creative

WINNER lactard: a person who is lactose-intolerant.

RUN-OFF: lactard 75, snowclone 27

Fed-Ex: nickname for K-Fed, a.k.a Kevin Federline, soon-to-be ex-husband of Britney Spears. 7

to **julie:** to organize an event. Also as a noun. From Julie McCoy, the character of cruise director on the television show *The Love Boat*, which ran from 1977 to 1986. 16

lactard 47

snowclone: an expression whose structure is borrowed to create new, similar expressions. Examples: *X is the new Y* (“blue is the new black”) and *X is dead; long live X!* (“the king is dead; long live the king!”). 30

Most Unnecessary

WINNER SuriKat: the supposed nickname of the baby girl of Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes. 56

the decider: with the definite article, a person who makes decisions for other decision-makers, as spoken by President George W. Bush. 26

Fox lips: lips colored and lined with makeup to seem more prominent, said of female anchors on Fox News. 19

Most Outrageous

WINNER Cambodian accessory: Angelina Jolie's adopted child who is Cambodian.

RUN-OFF: Cambodian accessory 61, sudden jihad syndrome 36

Cambodian accessory 20

firecrotch: a person with red pubic hair. 10

macaca: an American citizen treated as an alien. 14

tramp stamp: a tattoo on a woman's upper bottom (or lower back). 7

sudden jihad syndrome: an outburst of violence from a seemingly stable and normal Muslim. 38

Most Euphemistic

WINNER waterboarding: an interrogation technique in which the subject is immobilized and doused with water to simulate drowning; reported to be used by U.S. interrogators against terrorism detainees.

RUN-OFF: surge 31, waterboarding 65

lancing: the forced public outing of a closeted gay celebrity, after 'N Sync singer Lance Bass. 23

lyric malfunction: obscenities scrubbed from the Rolling Stones' Super Bowl performance. 1

waterboarding 46

surge: an increase in troop strength. 26

Most Likely to Succeed

WINNER: YouTube: as a verb, to use the YouTube web site or to have a video of one's self be posted on the site. 61

carbon: in combining forms about reducing waste emissions, used as shorthand for air pollution. 16

the decider: with the definite article, a person who makes decisions for other decision-makers, as spoken by President George W. Bush. 3

macaca moment: an ethnic or racial gaffe caught on video. 5

m-, man-, men- as "man-fixes" in compounds and blends such as *moobs*, *manboobs*, *murse*, *man purse*, *mancation*, *man crush*, *manmaries*, *menaissance*, etc. 9

Least Likely to Succeed

WINNER grup: a Gen-Xer who does not act his or her age. 81

pwn: to "own" someone; to defeat, beat, or best someone. From mis-typing in online gaming. 4

stay the course: to continue an action or undertaking despite it being less successful than desired. 1

New Category: Pluto-Related Words

WINNER to be **plutoed**, to **pluto**: to be demoted or devalued. 87

dwarf planet: new International Astronomical Union designation for Pluto and other not-quite-planetary bodies in the solar system. 5

pluton: originally chosen by the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union as a category for trans-Neptunian objects, like Pluto, that did not warrant designation as true planets. However, the term was already in use in geology to refer to a large mass of intrusive igneous rock believed to have solidified deep within the earth. Another candidate name was *plutonoid*. 3

small solar system body (SSSB): object in the solar system that is neither a planet nor a dwarf planet (e.g., a comet or small asteroid). 0

Founded in 1889, the American Dialect Society is dedicated to the study of the English language in North America, and of other languages, or dialects of other languages, influencing it or influenced by it. ADS members are linguists, lexicographers, etymologists, historians, grammarians, academics, editors, writers, and independent scholars in the fields of English, foreign languages, and other disciplines. The society also publishes the quarterly journal *American Speech*.

The American Dialect Society began choosing Words of the Year in 1990. Winners are listed below. A full account of the previous choices may be found on the American Dialect Society's website, www.americandialect.org.

Not all words chosen for a particular year are destined to become permanent additions to the vocabulary. *Y2K* in 1999 and *chad* in 2000 are examples of prominent terms that faded quickly. An explanation of which words are likely to succeed may be found in *Predicting New Words: The Secrets of Their Success* by Allan Metcalf, published in 2002 by Houghton Mifflin.

American Dialect Society: Words of Previous Years

2005 Word of the Year *truthiness*, what one wishes to be the truth regardless of the facts. (From the *Colbert Report* with Stephen Colbert, a mock news show on Comedy Central.) Most Useful: *podcast*, audio or video file for downloading. Most Creative: *whale-tail*, the appearance of thong or g-string underwear above the waistband. Most Unnecessary: *K Fed*, Kevin Federline, Mr. Britney Spears. Most Outrageous: *crotchfruit*, a child or children. Most Euphemistic: *internal nutrition* force-feeding a prisoner. Most Likely to Succeed: *sudoku* number puzzle from Japan. Least Likely to Succeed: *pope-squatting* registering a likely domain name of a new pope before the pope chooses his new name in order to profit from it. Special nonce category, Best Tom Cruise-Related Word: *jump the couch*, to exhibit frenetic behavior like Cruise's couch-bouncing on Oprah Winfrey's talk show.

2004 Word of the Year: *red/blue/purple states*, red favoring conservative Republicans and blue favoring liberal Democrats, as well as the undecided *purple states* in the political map of the United States. Most Useful: *phish*, to induce someone to reveal private information by means of deceptive e-mail. Most Creative: *pajamahadeen*, bloggers who challenge and fact-check traditional media. Most Unnecessary: *stalkette*, a female stalker. Most Outrageous: *santorum*, byproduct of anal sex, using the name of a senator opposed to the practice. Most Euphemistic: *badly sourced*, false. Most Likely to Succeed: *red/blue/purple states*. Least Likely to Succeed: *FLOHPA*, Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, important states in the 2004 presidential election.

2003 Word of the Year: *metrosexual*, fashion-conscious heterosexual male. Most Useful:

flexitarian, vegetarian who occasionally eats meat. Most Creative: *freegan*, person who eats only free food. Most Unnecessary: *freedom* for “French,” as in fries and kisses. Most Outrageous: *cliterati*, feminist writers or leaders. Most Euphemistic: *pre-emptive self-defense*, attack before a possible attack on oneself. Most Likely to Succeed: *SARS*, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, viral disease first reported in Asia in February. Least Likely to Succeed: *tomacco*, poisonous hybrid of tomato and tobacco. Best Revival of an old term: *spider hole*, World War II term for a hole deeper than a foxhole used for surprise attacks; in 2003, where Saddam Hussein was hiding.

2002 Word of the Year: *weapons of mass destruction* or *WMD*, sought for in Iraq. Most Likely to Succeed: *blog*, from “weblog,” a website of personal events, comments, and links. Most Useful: *google* (verb), as in “to google someone,” to search the Web using the search engine Google for information on a person or thing. Most Creative: *Iraqnophobia*, strong fear of Iraq. Most Unnecessary: *wombanization*, feminization, from Alexander Barnes’s book “The Book Read Backwards: The Deconstruction of Patriarchy and the Wombanization of Being.” Most Outrageous: *neuticles*, fake testicles for neutered pets. Most Euphemistic: *regime change*, forced change in leadership.

2001 Word of the Year: *9-11*, *9/11* or *September 11*, terrorist attacks on that date. Most Likely to Succeed: *9-11*. Most Useful (tie): *facial profiling*, using video “faceprints” to identify terrorists and criminals, and *second-hand speech*, cell phone conversations heard by others in public places. Most Creative: *shuicide bomber*, terrorist with bomb in shoes. Most Unnecessary: *impeachment nostalgia*, longing for the superficial news of the Clinton era. Least Likely to Succeed: *Osamaniac*, woman sexually attracted to terrorist Osama bin Laden. Most Outrageous: *assoline*, methane used as fuel. Most Euphemistic: *daisy cutter*, large bomb that explodes a few feet above the ground. Most Inspirational: *Let’s roll!* words of Todd Beamer to start the attack that foiled the hijackers of United Flight 93 on September 11.

2000 Word of the Year: *chad*, a small scrap of paper punched from a voting card. Most Likely to Succeed: *muggle*, Harry Potter term for a non-wizard; a mundane, unimaginative person. Most Useful: *civil union*, legal same-sex marriage. Most Creative: *dot bomb*, a failed dot-com. Most Unnecessary: *sudden loss of wealth syndrome*. Least Likely to Succeed: *kablokeys*, used in phrases like “It scared the kablokeys out of me.” Most Outrageous: *wall humping*, rubbing a thigh against a security card scanner to allow access without removing the card from one’s pocket. Most Euphemistic: *courtesy call*, an uninvited call from a telemarketer. Brand New (coined during the year, not previously attested): *unconcede*, to rescind a concession as presidential candidate Al Gore did on election night. (It was later discovered that candidate Bob Dole had *unconceded* the presidential election in 1996, and there were occasional instances of that word going back several centuries.)

(Also chosen in January 2000: Word of the Decade: *web*. Word of the Twentieth Century: *jazz*. Word of the Millennium: *she*.)

1999 Word of the Year: *Y2K*. Most Likely to Succeed and Most Useful: *dot-com*, a company operating on the web. Most Original: *cybersquat*, to register a web address intending to sell it at a profit. Most unnecessary: *Milly*, dance commissioned by the city of Chicago for the millennium. Most Outrageous: *humanitarian intervention*, use of military force for humanitarian purposes. Most Euphemistic: *compassionate conservative*. Brand New (coined during the year, not previously attested): *Pokémania*, obsession with Pokémon.

1998 Word of the Year: prefix *e-* for “electronic” as in *e-mail* and newly prominent *e-commerce*. Most Likely to Succeed and Most Useful: *e-*. Most Original: *multislacking*, playing at the computer when one should be working. Most Unnecessary: the entire Monica Lewinsky word family, including *Big She* as a synonym for M.L., and the verb *Lewinsky*, to engage in what might be sexual relations. Least Likely to Succeed: *compfusion*, confusion over computers. Most

Outrageous: *Ejaculation Proclamation*, the President's confession. Most Euphemistic: *senior moment*, momentary lapse of memory due to age. Brand New (coined during the year, not previously attested): *-agra* or *-gra* (from the drug name *Viagra*), suffix denoting substance prompting men to perform unusually, as in *Directra* that causes men to ask for directions.

1997 Word of the Year: *millennium bug*, also known as *Y2K bug* or *Y2K problem*, that causes computers to think that the year after 1999 is 1900. Most Likely to Succeed: *DVD*, Digital Versatile Disk, optical disk expected to replace CDs. Most Useful: (tie) *-[r]azzi*, an aggressive pursuer, and *duh* (with a falling intonation), expression of someone else's stupidity. Most Original: *prairie dogging*, popping one's head above an office cubicle for the sake of curiosity. Most Unnecessary: *heaven-o*, replacement for "hello." Most Outrageous: *Florida flambe*, fire caused by Florida electric chair. Most Euphemistic: *exit bag*, bag placed over the head to assist in suicide. Brand New (coined during the year, not previously attested): *El Nonsense*, illogical association of an event with El Niño.

1996 Word of the Year: *mom* as in *soccer mom*, newly significant type of voter. Most Likely to Succeed: *drive-by*, designating brief visits or hospital stays. Most Useful: *dot*, used instead of "period" in e-mail and URL addresses. Most Original: *prebuttal*, preemptive rebuttal. Most Unnecessary: *Mexican hustle*, another name for the Macarena (which is not Mexican). Most Outrageous: *toy soldier*, land mine. Most Euphemistic: (tie) *urban camping*, living homeless in a city, and *food insecure*, said of a country where people are starving. Most Controversial: *Ebonics*, African-American vernacular English.

1995 Word of the Year: (tie) *World Wide Web* on the Internet, and *newt*, to make aggressive changes as a newcomer. Most Likely to Succeed: *World Wide Web* and its variants *the Web*, *WWW*, *W3*. Most Useful: *E.Q.* (for *Emotional Quotient*), the ability to manage one's emotions. Most Original: *postal* or *go postal*, to act irrationally, often violently, from stress at work. Most Unnecessary: *Vanna White shrimp*, large shrimp for the restaurant market. Most Outrageous: *starter marriage*, a first marriage not expected to be the last. Most Euphemistic: *patriot*, one who believes in using force of arms if necessary to defend individual rights against the government.

1994 Word of the Year: (tie) *cyber*, pertaining to computers and electronic communication, and *morph*, to change form. Most Promising: *Infobahn*, the Internet. Most Useful: *gingrich*, to deal with government agencies, policies, and people in the manner of U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Most Imaginative: *guillermo*, an e-mail message in a foreign language. (The Spanish name *Guillermo* has the nickname *Memo*.) Most Trendy: *dress down day* or *casual day*, a workday when employees are allowed to dress casually. Most Euphemistic: *challenged* indicating an undesirable or unappealing condition. Most Beautiful: *sylvanshine*, night-time iridescence of certain forest trees.

1993 Word of the Year: *information superhighway*, network linking computers, television, telephone, and other electronic means of communication. Most Likely to Succeed: quotative *like* with a form of the verb *be* to indicate speech or thought. Most Useful: *thing* premodified by a noun, e.g. "a Chicago thing." Most Imaginative: *McJob*, a generic, unstimulating, low-paying job. Most Amazing: *cybersex*, sexual stimulation by computer. Most Unnecessary: *mosaic culture* to describe a multicultural society. Most Outrageous: *whirlpooling*, assault of a female by a male group in a swimming pool. Most Euphemistic: *street builder*, a homeless person who constructs a shanty. Most Unpronounceable: *Jurassosaurus nedegoapeferkimorum*, a new dinosaur.

1992 Word of the Year: *Not!* expression of disagreement. Most Likely to Succeed: *snail mail*, *s-mail*, mail that is physically delivered, as opposed to e-mail. Most Useful: *grunge*, a style of clothing. Most Original: *Franken-*, genetically altered. Most Amazing: *Munchhausen's*

syndrome by proxy, illness fabricated to evoke sympathy for the caregiver. Most Unnecessary: *gender feminism*, belief that sex roles are social, not biological. Most Outrageous: *ethnic cleansing*, purging of ethnic minorities.

1991 Word of the Year: *mother of all* —, greatest, most impressive. Most Likely to Succeed: *rollerblade*, skate with rollers in a single row. Most Successful: *in your face*, aggressive, confrontational, flamboyant. Most Original: *molecular pharming*, *pharming*, genetically modifying farm animals to produce human proteins for pharmaceutical use. Most Amazing: *velcroid*, a person who sticks by the (U.S.) president, especially for photo opportunities. Most Unnecessary: *massively parallel*, many small computers yoked together.

1990 Word of the Year: *bushlips*, insincere political rhetoric. Most Likely to Succeed: (tie) *notebook PC*, a portable personal computer weighting 4-8 pounds, and *rightsizing*, adjusting the size of a staff by laying off employees. Most Useful: (tie) *technostupidity*, loss of ability through dependence on machines, and *potty parity*, equalization of toilet facilities for the sexes. Most Original: *voice merging*, the oral tradition of African-American preachers using another's words. Most Amazing: *bungee jumping*, jumping from a high platform with elastic cables on the feet. Most Unnecessary: *peace dividend*, anticipated saving in military spending due to improved relations with the Soviet Union. Most Outrageous: *politically correct*, *PC*, adhering to principles of left-wing social concern.

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