

WORDS OF THE WEEK – WEEK 7 2017

THE WORD OF THE WEEK IS RAPPORT. Rapport – (Pronounced without the T - RAP POR). This is a great word to describe successful work relationships. Of course, you can say that you get on with your boss, but that is fairly informal. If you would like to say that you have a good working relationship with someone which is only professional, then use the word *rapport*. It means you don't necessarily socialise or have any personal relationship however you share an equal understanding and trust. For example, you can have a good rapport with your boss, neighbours, teachers, colleagues or even extended family members (in-laws especially).

Nice words to use when you are bored or unchallenged at work:

- **Tedious** - If something is tedious, it's really boring and often involves concentrating on very small details. We all have tedious tasks to do, such as on Monday going through all the emails, counting your receipts or doing a stock take, for example "I have the tedious task this week of checking timesheets and holiday allocations for our staff".
- **Monotonous** – If something is monotonous it is boring and repetitive as well as tedious. Working as a checkout person in a supermarket seems extraordinarily monotonous. You scan, tell the customers how much, then ask if they have a member card, wait for them to pay, then ask if they want a receipt...over and over and over again.
- **Menial** – (Pronounced MEAN - IAL) If a task is menial it is something you definitely want to delegate. Menial tasks take very little skill, talent or experience to accomplish. Stocking shelves, counting stationary, or even doing the laundry are all menial tasks.

Verbose – If something is verbose, it uses far more words than it needs to. A book, report, PowerPoint presentation and explanations can all be verbose. Everyone knows of someone who packs all their communications with long, over complicated words that aren't at all necessary. You can call them verbose.

Pontify – (you can also use pontificate which has the same meaning, however it does not sound as nice). To pontify, as a verb means to talk down to someone in a pompous, demeaning manner with an air of superiority. The conversations with people pontifying are generally one way monologues masked as a conversation. People that pontify are NOT generally impolite or rude, they are instead speaking in a snobbish or stubborn manner and not listening to opposing opinions. Parents can often pontify to their children, so can teachers and bosses. If you are rolling your eyes waiting for the conversation, speech or lecture to end then the person speaking is pontifying.

Criteria vs criterion vs criterias - It seems to be very common for people to use: 1 x criteria and 2 x criterias. THIS IS WRONG and even native English speakers make the same mistake. Singular form is criterion and plural is criteria (**never criterias**). For example, there are many criteria that have to be met when applying for Finnish citizenship, the main criterion being you have to live in Finland for at least 5 years before applying.

Phenomena vs Phenomenon vs phenomenas - Like criterion and criteria, many native and non-native English speakers get this wrong. It is 1 x Phenomenon and 2 x Phenomena (never phenomenas).

Crisis vs Crises vs Crisises – 1 x Crisis and 2 x Crises [Pronounced KRI SEEZ]. Crisises does not exist and unfortunately is often used in spoken English by even native English speakers.

Widow vs Widower - Remember that a widow is the term for a wife that has lost her husband and a WIDOWER is a husband that has lost his wife.

Catch 22 – THIS EXPRESSION IS VERY COMMONLY USED because we often find ourselves in a catch22. If you are in a bad situation, dilemma or difficult circumstance where any choice you make will lead into a bad result, you are stuck in a ‘catch22’. We have all been there. For example, you have the choice of either renovating your kitchen or going on holiday during the summer. If you renovate your kitchen, sure it will be nice, however you’ll have to wait another year to have a holiday. If you go on holiday, you’ll have to live with a bad kitchen for at least another year - you are stuck in a catch22.

To hamper – (Nothing to do with a Christmas hamper which is a basket of Christmas goodies), as a verb anything that ‘hampers’ you slows your progress, minimises the impact of, or lessens the effect of something. Lots of snow can hamper your journey, poor sales can hamper your company’s growth plans and poor production efficiency can hamper profits. Most people would agree that having kids hampers your social life. Here was a headline from the Financial Times - “Credit Suisse has lowered profit targets for its main global wealth management businesses and announced further cost cuts as turbulent financial markets HAMPER a strategic overhaul”.

To overhaul – to do an overhaul or to overhaul something means to do MAJOR repair to fix something. The key is to fix it. For a car, an overhaul would be reconditioning the engine, for a house an overhaul is to completely renovate. If you are overhauling your business, then you are probably going to do a lot of layoffs and completely rewrite your business strategy.

Ambiguous – This is a fantastic adjective to use if something is unclear, vague or may have more than one meaning. A person’s gender can be ambiguous, sentences in texts can be ambiguous and clauses in a contract should NOT be ambiguous.

Ambivalent – If you feel uncertain about a decision, or you would like to find out more about a circumstance before deciding, then you are ambivalent about it. “I remain ambivalent and will not make a decision until I see more facts and figures”.

Losing your job - Unfortunately, with the economic situation around the world being what it is, companies are still doing a lot of downsizing which means reducing staff numbers and generally cutting costs. In these cases most non-native English speakers will overuse the term “firing” staff. However, it may not always be the appropriate choice of words:

- **To ‘fire’, ‘sack’ or ‘axe’** someone generally implies that they have done something wrong. If you come home to your partner and say “honey, I have been fired (sacked or axed)”, it means you have done something stupid. (To be fired literally means to be put in front of a firing squad. Getting sacked refers to the brutal way of getting rid of kittens, you are put into a sack and thrown over the bridge, and of course getting the axe means to be be-headed). NB, while you can get fired, axed or sacked, you can also "get THE sack" and "get THE axe".
- **To be “laid off” or “let go”** implies that the company is “downsizing” or “restructuring” and you have lost your job for no fault of your own.
- **To be “made redundant”** also means the company is downsizing or restructuring, however, you are getting the golden handshake and will be paid some form of compensation for losing your job. (The compensation is called a “redundancy package”). If you come home and say “honey I have been made redundant” then no more catch22, your partner will want both the kitchen and the holiday.