

When Is A Pig A Hog?

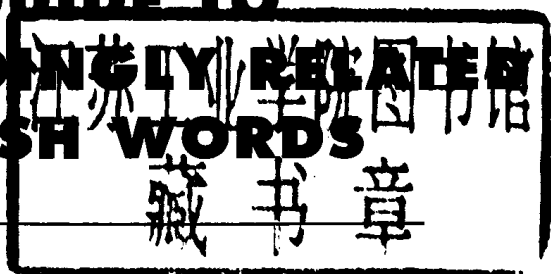


**A GUIDE TO
CONFOUNDINGLY RELATED
ENGLISH WORDS**

Bernice Randall

When Is A Pig A Hog?

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ENGLISH WORDS



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Preface

When is a pig not a pig? When it's a hog. That is, once a pig tips the scale at 120 pounds, it becomes a hog. But no matter how much weight a salamander puts on, it does not become a lizard. And a polliwog is a tadpole from the moment it hatches.

Whether English is our first language or an acquired one, we are sometimes uneasy in choosing between certain words. That is because we are not sure whether the words have virtually the same meanings and can therefore freely replace one another, have closely related meanings yet are interchangeable only in certain contexts, or have different meanings but are nonetheless linked through frequent association.

Tadpole, polliwog is but one pair of virtual equivalents we might hesitate to use interchangeably for fear of overlooking a distinction our listeners or readers know about. Among the others are *income statement, profit and loss statement; tone poem, symphonic poem*; and *crib death, SIDS, sudden infant death syndrome*. The number is not limitless, of course, because two or more words with precisely the same meaning are a rarity in any language. In fact, even among terms generally considered alike there is room for choice. For example, *Indian, American Indian, Native American, Amerindian, and Amerind* are freely substituted for one another, but nowadays many people prefer *Native American*, especially in reference to North American Indians.

The vast English word stock includes countless terms that, without being equivalents, have one or more closely related senses—so closely related as to make us uneasy occasionally. In some contexts, we wonder, is one word more appropriate than another? Even though *hog* refers to a full-grown *pig*, can either word be applied to a domesticated *swine*? Is *normal school* as commonly used as *teachers college*? Should the *QE2* be called a *boat* or a *ship*? What is the connection between *Kampuchea* and *Cambodia*?

And then there are many terms that, though they differ in meaning, somehow spring to mind in pairs or sets. So the question arises as to which term means what. Both a *salamander* and a *lizard* are coldblooded vertebrates, but which is a reptile like a snake and which an amphibian like a frog? Is it the *Peter Principle, Murphy's Law, or Parkinson's Law* that says if there is a possibility for something to go wrong it will? Does a *battalion* consist of more than one *brigade*, or is it the other way around? Is a child of one's parent's first cousin a *second cousin* or a *first cousin once removed*? Besides wanting to feel comfortable with such terms when we come across them in our reading and conversation, we often think of words but have trouble recalling others that mean the opposite or at least something quite different. If *zenith* is up, what is down? What is the angle that is greater than a *right angle* but less than a *straight angle*? What do we call a sculpture that is

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abstract like a *mobile* yet stationary? What, besides *draw*, is a basic form of poker?

In writing *When Is a Pig a Hog?* I had in mind two kinds of reader who, I hoped, would be one and the same person. First, someone who, without being a grammarian or linguist, has a lively interest in the English language. And, second, someone who is curious about people, places, things, human activities, nature, science—whatever his or her experience encompasses and more.

The book is divided into eight main sections:

Human and Not So Human Beings

Here and There

Things

Concepts, Actions, and Other Intangibles

The Arts: Fine and Otherwise

Nature and Science

Our Bodies and Medicine

Organizations and Institutions

In addition, two appendixes give information not easily incorporated in the text:

Gods and Goddesses in Greek and Roman Mythology

Geologic Time Chart

A book nowhere near a dictionary or encyclopedia in size and scope cannot, of-course, exhaust such a broad range of subjects. Given the infinite number of possibilities, it was difficult to decide what to include and what to leave out, and not everyone will agree with the choices I finally made.

The short, informal entries deal more with current, everyday terms than with dated or abstruse ones: *couch*, *sofa*, *settee*, *davenport*, *divan*, *chesterfield*, say, instead of *cuspidor*, *spittoon* or *bow-back armchair*, *banister-back chair*, *comb-back rocker*. Even the abstractions are likely to be familiar to most readers

(*crime, felony, misdemeanor*, for example, rather than *adjure, abjure*). Pairs or sets of words are not included simply because they have similar or identical sounds (*cryogenics, cryonics* and *reign, rein*), any more than those that vary only in spelling are (*advisor, adviser* and *kindergartner, kindergartener*). Nor is the book intended as a compendium of British and American equivalents, such as *elevator* and *lift*. However, British usage is brought up if it is appropriate to a discussion of related terms used in the United States; for instance, the word *chemist* is mentioned in the *pharmacist / druggist* entry in "Human and Not So Human Beings."

Within each subject category the entries are arranged somewhat loosely by subtopic. "Here and There," for example, begins with a number of terms referring to the world at large, among them *nation, state, and country*, before discussing others having to do specifically with the Western Hemisphere, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. This organization is different from the dictionary-style alphabetical arrangement found in many reference books, especially those concerned with words, for it is intended to invite browsing. Most readers will readily follow the progression from, say, *Near East / Middle East* to *Iran / Persia* without wondering why the sequence is not reversed. For those who want to know whether a particular word is discussed and, if so, where, the index lists not only the two headwords that introduce the entries but virtually all words defined or explained in the text and the appendixes. The *Near East / Middle East* entry, for example, takes up *Far East* as well, besides giving *Mideast* as a variant of *Middle East*, so all four terms appear in the index.

The various subject categories naturally have some give. One reason is so that the information on a certain topic can be rounded out. For example, even though *pants / trousers* and *shirt / blouse* are entries in "Things," *black belt / white belt* follows *jujitsu / judo* among those on sports and games in "Concepts, Actions, and Other Intangibles": black belts neither hold up pants nor keep shirts tucked in. Another reason is simply that language refuses to be squeezed into compartments. The *remainder / residue* entry, for instance, appears in "Concepts, Actions, and Other Intangibles," for both words commonly express qualities thought of as unrelated to a particular or material object ("the remainder of one's life" and "the residue of Grandpa's estate"). Yet, because it includes *remnant*, which often suggests that which can be perceived by the senses ("remnants of cloth from the ends of bolts"), the entry might have been placed in "Things." Indeed, the classic trick image of a vase that becomes a couple about to kiss turns up from time to time in the book. While we are looking at the vase, we cannot for the life of us see the couple—until they drive the vase completely out of sight.

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Human and Not So Human Beings

man / male

Man is the standard general term for an adult human being who is not a woman (as in “President Reagan appointed 13 men and no women to his cabinet in 1981”).

Male is applied to plants, animals, and human beings as the basic term for members of the sex that is biologically distinguished from the female sex. The male biological symbol is σ . Both within and beyond the fields of science and technology, the word *male* is appropriate wherever *female* would be in a similar context.

Boy is roughly the equivalent of *girl* (“Two boys and two girls were finalists in the spelling bee”). Once a boy is 18 years old, he is generally referred to as a *man* or a *young man*. *Youth* is also applied to a male who falls somewhere between childhood and adulthood. Although *youths* means “young people” or “young people collectively” (as in “Black TV anchors are positive role models for black youths”), the singular form of the word is associated with a young man, not with a young woman. *Lad* may seem old-fashioned, recalling, say, A. E. Housman’s late-nineteenth-century poem *A Shropshire Lad*, but it is sometimes used as the equivalent of *boy*, *young man*, or *youth*.

woman / female

Woman is the standard general term for an adult human being who is not a man (as in “President Bush appointed 13 men and 1 woman to his cabinet in 1989”).

The word may be modified by *young* if the person is no longer a child yet not old enough to be considered an adult (“As a young woman, she spent her summers as a camp counselor”). When used simply as an equivalent of *woman*, *female* is widely regarded as a contemptuous term. So statements like “FDR’s mother was a strong-willed female” and “Sandra Day O’Connor is the first female appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court” occur less often in speech and writing than they used to.

On the other hand, *female* is considered appropriate in biological references, whether to plants, animals, or human beings, if *male* would be expected in similar constructions involving the other sex. (For example: The

uterus is a hollow, muscular organ of female mammals. The prostate gland is a partly muscular gland surrounding the urethra at the base of the bladder in most male mammals.) The female biological symbol is ♀. *Female*, like *male*, often appears in statistical tables and other technical contexts, particularly if age is either unknown or irrelevant ("In 1988 the total number of arrests for females was 1,583,426; for males, 7,251,407").

Until recently, *lady* was used in polite or genteel references to any woman ("In case she is in an accident, a lady never leaves home with a safety pin on her underwear"). Nowadays, however, *lady* is frowned upon as a general substitute for *woman* unless *gentleman* would be the corresponding term in place of *man*. That is, "Amelia Earhart was the first lady to make a solo transatlantic flight" would go counter to current usage no less than "Charles Lindbergh was the first gentleman to make a solo, nonstop transatlantic flight" would. Because of the same implied condescension, *lady* is ordinarily avoided as a modifier too. For instance, *lady lawyer* is likely to be replaced by *woman lawyer* or simply *lawyer*; *cleaning lady*, by *cleaning woman* or simply *cleaner*. Yet *lady* is still used in certain set phrases, such as "ladies and gentlemen"; in poetry (as in Yeats's verse "She was more beautiful than thy first love, / This lady by the trees"); and for a woman of high social position ("Today's economy has compelled more than one English lord and lady to open their manor houses to tourists").

Though appropriate in referring to a female under 18 years of age, *girl* is considered patronizing as a general term for a woman of any age, married or single. So "the girls" in Helen Hokinson's cartoons of yesterday would be women today; women or young women, not girls, attend Mills College; and many executives are careful to say, "My secretary will send you a copy of the memo"—not "My girl," much less "My gal." In keeping with the trend toward nonsexist language, even "The Kelly Girl People" now call themselves "Kelly Temporary Services" in their ads.

Indian / American Indian

Thinking they had reached the subcontinent of India instead of America, European explorers of Columbus's time called the inhabitants they encountered *Indians*. In the eighteenth century, the term *American Indian* took its place alongside *Indian* to designate a member of any of the aboriginal peoples of North America, especially south of the Arctic, or of South America or the West Indies. Nowadays *Native American* is preferred by many, especially in reference to North American Indians. *Amerindian* and *Amerind*, both blends of *American Indian*, are also used, though more often in scientific contexts than in everyday speech and writing.

black / African-American

Over time, a number of terms have been used to designate a dark-skinned American of African descent. Because language does not change overnight, an expressed preference for one of them has not immediately driven out all the others. So, with greater or lesser acceptance, *Negro*, *colored person*, *black*, *Afro-American*, and *African-American* have existed side by side.

Negro, a Latin-derived word meaning “black,” which English borrowed from Spanish and Portuguese, has been used continuously in the United States since colonial times. The 1688 “Germantown Mennonite Resolution against Slavery,” for instance, advocated the freedom of “negers”; and in his last will and testament (1799), George Washington asked that his slaves, whom he called “Negros,” be freed. In 1900, Booker T. Washington founded the National Negro Business League. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1960 refers to the “Negroes’ right to vote.” And the word *Negro* appears in the names of many active organizations, including the National Council of Negro Women, founded in 1935 by Mary McLeod Bethune, and the United Negro College Fund, founded in 1944.

Originally simply a dialectal variant of *Negro*, the term *nigger* is today acceptable only in Black English. In all other contexts it is now regarded as virtually taboo because of the legacy of racial hatred that underlies the history of its use among whites and because of its continuing use among a minority as a viciously hostile epithet.

The adjective *colored*, too, goes back a long way. A number of organizations such as the Colored National Labor Union were founded in the nineteenth century, and since its establishment in 1909 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has played a major role in the civil rights movement. James Weldon Johnson’s *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* was published in 1912. Yet in recent years the word *colored* has largely fallen into disuse in the States. In 1970, for instance, the Catholic Board for Mission Work among the Colored People became the Catholic Negro-American Mission Board. In South Africa, however, *colored* (usually written *Coloured*) continues to be applied to a person of racially mixed parentage.

That *black* has for many years been freely interchanged with *Negro* and *colored person* is apparent from publications like David Walker’s 1829 antislavery pamphlet, in which all three terms appear. But not until the 1960s did many people, including leaders of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), call for the adoption of *black* as a positive term of identification. The concept of “black power” and the slogan “black is beautiful” became assertions of pride and self-awareness. Gradually taken up by the news media and

the public at large, *black* is now the most widely used term. Unlike *Negro*, which (together with *Caucasian*) is capitalized as the name of a race, *black* (like *white*) is generally lowercased in designating the pigmentation of one's skin. Yet *black* is of course capitalized in proper names, such as Black English, Black Muslim, Black Panther Party, and Congressional Black Caucus.

Though not as popular as *Negro* or *black*, *Afro-American* (sometimes *Aframerican*) has also been widely used. As early as 1850, an Afro-American Convention was held in Chicago. From the 1960s on, *Afro-American* has, like *black*, replaced *Negro* in the names of many organizations, institutions, and publications. The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, for example, used to be called the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

African-American has had its advocates, too. Long before Jesse Jackson and other prominent blacks endorsed the term in 1988, organizations such as the African-American Institute and the African-American Labor Center had been in operation. Although *African-American* is gaining acceptance in speech and print, its detractors point out that the reference to Americans of African ancestry fails to take into account the diversity of black America.

The wide choice of current terms has not gone unnoticed by the Bureau of the Census. In the pamphlet *Your Guide for the 1990 U.S. Census Form*, the instruction for the question on "the race each person considers himself / herself to be" notes: "The Black or Negro category also includes persons who identify as African-American, Afro-American, Haitian, Jamaican, West Indian, Nigerian, and so on."

Hispanic / Latino

Hispanic and *Latino* are freely interchanged in referring to a Spanish-speaking person of Latin American origin who lives in the United States. For example, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, in Washington, is likely to hear regularly from the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials. And, reacting strongly to the view expressed in early 1990 by the U.S. Attorney for San Francisco to the effect that the Hispanic community protects drug dealers, several civil rights groups described Joseph Russoniello's statements as "a painful, grave and racist insult to the Hispanic community in the Bay Area and to Latinos everywhere."

Hispanic seems to have a slight edge over *Latino*. This may be because *Latino*, like *Latin-American*, is applied also to a native or inhabitant of Latin America (much the way *Spanish-American* is to a native or inhabitant of Spanish America, especially one of Spanish descent). Those who want a feminine form of *Latino* follow Spanish practice by using *Latina*.

Chicano / Mexican-American

Chicano designates a *Mexican-American*; that is, a citizen or inhabitant of the United States who is of Mexican descent. The word drops the first syllable of the Spanish *mexicano*, from which it is derived. It is pronounced with an initial “ch” resembling the “sh” sound of “meshicas,” as the *mexicas*, a small but important group of early inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico, were called. The feminine form of *Chicano* is *Chicana*.

mestizo / mulatto

Terms referring to people whose parents are of different ethnic types are generally regarded as offensive, because they are often used contemptuously. Yet these words are part of the language, so distinguishing among the principal ones might be helpful for those who come across them, especially in their reading.

Amerasian denotes a person of both American and Asian descent, especially the child of a U.S. serviceman and an Asian mother.

Creole originally referred to a person of European parentage born in the West Indies, Central America, tropical South America, or the Gulf States of the United States. The term was later applied to a descendant of such people: specifically (1) a person descended from the original French settlers of Louisiana, especially of the New Orleans area; (2) a person descended from the original Spanish settlers in the Gulf States, especially Texas; and (3) a person of mixed Creole and Negro descent.

Eurasian (formerly *half-caste*) designates a person who has one European parent and one Asian parent, or a person who is generally of mixed European and Asian descent.

Half-breed (or sometimes *half-blood*), though it may denote anyone whose parents are of different ethnic types, refers especially to a person who has one North American Indian parent and one parent of European ancestry.

Mestizo, though also often applied to anyone of mixed ancestry, refers especially in the western United States and in Latin America to a person who has one Spanish or Portuguese parent and one American Indian parent.

Mulatto designates a person who has one black parent and one white

parent. Technically, the term refers to anyone with mixed Negro and Caucasian ancestry.

nisei / issei

A *nisei* is a native U.S. citizen born of immigrant Japanese parents and educated in America. An *issei* is a Japanese who emigrated to the United States after the Oriental exclusion proclamation of 1907 and was thus ineligible by law, until 1952, to become a U.S. citizen. A *kibei* is a native U.S. citizen born of immigrant Japanese parents but educated largely in Japan. *Nisei* means "second generation" in Japanese; *issei*, "first generation"; and *kibei*, of Sino-Japanese origin, "return to America, U.S.A." All three words are often capitalized

atheist / agnostic

In a religious context, *believers* are people who accept the truth of a particular religion or of the existence of God or gods. Those who are less accepting are generally grouped according to the extent of their uncertainty.

An *atheist* rejects all religious belief and flatly denies the existence of God. The word comes from the Greek: the prefix *a-* (meaning "without") + *theos* ("god").

An *agnostic* believes that the human mind cannot know whether there is a God or an ultimate cause, or anything beyond material phenomena. That is, he or she questions the existence of God, heaven, and other religious tenets in the absence of material proof and in unwillingness to accept supernatural revelation. The term, coined in 1870 by the English biologist Thomas Henry Huxley, attaches the prefix *a-* to *gnostic*, which derives from a Greek word for "knowledge."

A *freethinker* believes in God as a creative, moving force but otherwise rejects formal religion and revelation, divine authority, and other doctrines as incompatible with reason. In other words, he or she forms opinions about religion independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.

Though sometimes considered a person who holds no religious belief, an *infidel* is more often thought to be one who does not believe in a certain religion or the prevailing religion. Specifically, he or she is likely

to be a non-Christian among Christians or a non-Muslim among Muslims.

An *unbeliever* is simply a person who does not accept any religious belief. This is a negative term, used without further qualification. An unbeliever is sometimes called a *nonbeliever*.

A *skeptic* (also spelled *sceptic*, especially by the British) is someone who habitually doubts, questions, or suspends judgment on matters that most people accept. Fundamental religious doctrines are but one such matter.

heretic / apostate

Though often used in political or philosophical contexts, the words *heretic*, *apostate*, and *renegade* have related religious senses as well. A *heretic* is a person who, though a member of a particular church, holds a belief opposed to the orthodox doctrines of that church. The charge of heresy is especially likely if the belief has been specifically denounced by the church. An *apostate*, like a *renegade*, is a person who has turned away from his or her religious faith, often replacing the abandoned religion with a set of opposing beliefs.

Baptist / Methodist

A *Protestant* is a member not of a single church but of any of the various Christian churches established as a result of the sixteenth-century Reformation. Generally speaking, a Protestant is any Christian not belonging either to the Roman Catholic Church or to the Eastern Orthodox Church. This latter community of churches (also called the Orthodox Eastern Church and, very loosely, the Greek Orthodox or Greek Church) is joined in its rejection of the authority of the pope and the Latin Rite.

Protestantism is divided into dozens of denominations, with specific names, structures, and sets of beliefs. Some of these religious bodies, and their members, are mentioned here.

A *Baptist* is a member of the Baptist denomination, which holds that the rite of purification known as baptism should be offered only to believers after confession of faith and that baptism should be by immersion rather than sprinkling.

A *Christian Scientist* is a member of the Church of Christ, Scientist, whose

system of healing is based on an interpretation of the Scriptures asserting that disease, sin, and death may be overcome by understanding and applying the divine principles of Christian teachings. This religious movement was founded in the nineteenth century by the American Mary Baker Eddy.

A *Congregationalist* is a member of the Congregational denomination, in which each member church, or congregation, is self-governing. This organization stems from the belief that the local congregations have Jesus Christ alone as their head and that the members are joined in one common family of God. Prominent in early New England, Congregationalism was later marked by union with other Protestant denominations.

An *Episcopalian* is a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, which in the United States grew out of the Church of England. Authority to govern the church rests in a body of bishops, and worship is based largely on the Book of Common Prayer, the official book of services and prayers for the Anglican Communion (the informal organization of the Church of England and derived churches with closely related beliefs and practices). Besides the U.S. church, the Anglican Communion includes such other churches as the Anglican Church of Canada and the Episcopal Church of Scotland.

A *Jehovah's Witness* is a member of the proselytizing American sect known as Jehovah's Witnesses, established in the late nineteenth century and named after Isaiah 43:10 ("Ye are my witnesses"). The Witnesses, each of whom is considered a minister of the gospel, believe in the second coming of Christ, the imminent battle of Armageddon, and the potential salvation of mortal souls during the millennium.

A *Lutheran* is a member of the Protestant denomination founded by Martin Luther, who, in the sixteenth century, broke with the Roman Catholic Church and led the Protestant Reformation in Germany. According to Lutheranism, the Bible is the only necessary guide to truth, the sacraments are no more than aids to faith, and salvation comes through faith, this being available through the redeeming work of Christ.

A *Mennonite* is a member of a Christian sect founded in the sixteenth century and existing in the United States since the seventeenth. Like the Anabaptists of Switzerland, with whom they got their start, Mennonites oppose the taking of oaths, infant baptism (though they favor baptism of adult believers), military service, and the holding of public office. The

Amish, a conservative group who separated from the Mennonites in the seventeenth century, share many of the Mennonites' beliefs. Some, even among those who live in the States, rely as little as possible on modern conveniences, preferring plain dress and plain living in their chiefly agrarian society.

A *Methodist* is a member of any branch of the Methodist Church, so named because its eighteenth-century evangelistic English founders stressed methodical religious study and worship. Personal and social responsibility and the ideal of Christian perfection are widely held beliefs and practices. The doctrinal and liturgical standards of Methodism, however, vary among the many groups into which the church has been divided.

A *Mormon* is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (commonly called the Mormon Church). Faith is based mainly on the Bible and the sacred Book of Mormon, which Joseph Smith, who founded the church in 1830, represented as his translation of an account of some ancient American peoples by a prophet among them named Mormon. Revelation through the connection of spiritual and physical worlds is a central doctrine of the church, whose members are encouraged to win converts to their faith.

A *Pentecostalist* is a member of any of various Pentecostal churches named after the Pentecost, which celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. This Christian festival, held on the seventh Sunday after Easter, is also called Whitsunday. The various fundamentalist Pentecostal sects, of which the Assemblies of God is the largest, generally stress direct inspiration by the Holy Spirit, as in glossolalia (speaking in tongues), faith healing, and the second coming of Christ.

A *Presbyterian* is a member of the Presbyterian Church, founded in Scotland in the sixteenth century and brought to America early in the eighteenth. Presbyterianism, in which presbyters, or elders, play an important role in church government, grew out of the Christian doctrines of John Calvin and his followers, including predestination and salvation of the elect solely by God's grace. Presbyterians believe in the prime authority of the Bible and accept the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist (the consecrated bread or wine, or both, used in Holy Communion).

A *Quaker* (also called a *Friend*) is a member of the Society of Friends, a Christian denomination established in England about 1650 by George