

# American Dialect Society

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*(For immediate release)*

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## American Dialect Society Selects “*enshittification*” as 2023 Word of the Year

SHERATON NEW YORK TIMES SQUARE HOTEL, NEW YORK, NY—JAN. 5—The American Dialect Society, in its 34th annual words-of-the-year vote, selected “*enshittification*” as the Word of the Year for 2023. More than three hundred attendees took part in the deliberations and voting, in an event hosted in conjunction with the Linguistic Society of America’s annual meeting.

The term *enshittification* became popular in 2023 after it was used in a blog post by author Cory Doctorow, who used it to describe how digital platforms can become worse and worse. “Here is how platforms die: first, they are good to their users; then they abuse their users to make things better for their business customers; finally, they abuse those business customers to claw back all the value for themselves. Then, they die. I call this *enshittification*,” Doctorow wrote on his Pluralistic blog.

Presiding at the Jan. 6 voting session were Ben Zimmer, chair of the ADS New Words Committee and language columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*, and Dr. Kelly Elizabeth Wright of Virginia Tech, data czar of the New Words Committee. “*Enshittification* is a sadly apt term for how our online lives have become gradually degraded,” Zimmer said. “From the time that it first appeared in Doctorow’s posts and articles, the word had all the markings of a successful neologism, being instantly memorable and adaptable to a variety of contexts.”

Word of the Year is interpreted in its broader sense as “vocabulary item”—not just words but also phrases, compounds, and affixes. The items do not have to be brand-new, but they have to be newly prominent or notable in the past year.

The vote is the longest-running such vote anywhere, the only one not tied to commercial interests, and *the* word-of-the-year event up to which all others lead. It is fully informed by the members’ expertise in the study of words, but it is far from a solemn occasion.

Members in the 134-year-old organization include linguists, lexicographers, etymologists, grammarians, historians, researchers, writers, editors, students, and independent scholars. In conducting the vote, they act in fun and do not pretend to be officially inducting words into the English language. Instead, they are highlighting that language change is normal, ongoing, and entertaining.

In a companion vote, sibling organization the American Name Society selected “Gaza” and “Barbie” as Names of the Year for 2023 in its 20th annual name-of-the-year contest. The two names were declared co-winners after tying in a runoff. Further information can be found on the society’s website, <https://www.americannamesociety.org/>.

## AMERICAN DIALECT SOCIETY VOTING RESULTS

Raw vote totals and percentages of the vote are given after each nomination. In cases requiring a runoff, two figures are given. Winners are indicated by an asterisk.

### WORD OF THE YEAR (2023)

**\* enshittification:** worsening of a digital platform through reduction in quality of service 68/92/158

**babygirl:** older male fictional character or celebrity seen as emotionally damaged, helpless, or vulnerable 10

**ceasefire:** rallying cry for those seeking a stoppage of hostilities in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict 29

**context:** word invoked by presidents of Harvard, MIT, and Penn to questions at a House hearing about prohibiting speech on campus 45/63

**(derogatory):** parenthetical comment humorously appended after a word that might not be expected to be derogatory 43/73/121

**girlie:** lighthearted and affectionate term of address for young women (also used in a broader more gender-inclusive way) 20

**Kenaissance:** renaissance in the wake of the *Barbie* movie’s depiction of Ken (also *Kenergy*, *Kenough*) 14

**let (someone) cook:** allow a person to do something that they are good at without interference 14

**stochastic parrot:** large language model that can generate plausible synthetic text without having any understanding 37/52

**MOST USEFUL/MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED**

\* **(derogatory)**: parenthetical comment humorously appended after a word that might not be expected to be derogatory 116

**cunty**: having an audaciously exceptional appearance or displaying fierce femininity (from LGBTQ ballroom culture) 26

**enshittification**: worsening of a digital platform through reduction in quality of service 37

**era**: a personal period defined by a noteworthy style or behavior (esp. in *in my X era*) 30

**girl/boy X**: way of doing something associated with a gender, as in *girl dinner*, *girl math*, *boy math* 55

**mother**: (adj.) admirable (as a term of endearment); (v.) to perform something admirably (from LGBTQ ballroom culture) 16

**POLITICAL WORD OF THE YEAR**

\* 🍉 (watermelon emoji): symbol of Palestinian solidarity used on social media 103/143

**context**: word invoked by presidents of Harvard, MIT, and Penn to questions at a House hearing about prohibiting speech on campus 61

**hot labor summer/hot union summer**: summer of 2023, when a number of unions went on strike 106/133

**I/P**: shorthand for the Israeli/Palestinian conflict 1

**DIGITAL WORD OF THE YEAR**

\* **enshittification**: worsening of a digital platform through reduction in quality of service 111

**chat**: collective term of address for those participating in a streamer's chat 59

**gamers**: second-person plural term of address, as on a gaming livestream 11

**ice cream so good**: response by TikTok streamer Pinkydoll to receiving an ice cream emoji 11

**millennial pause**: pause by a millennial at the beginning of a recorded video, as opposed to the *Gen Z shake* (shaky video at the start of recording) 45

**skibidi**: nonsense word popularized by the YouTube animated series Skibidi Toilet 46

**INFORMAL WORD OF THE YEAR**

\* **let (someone) cook**: allow a person to do something that they are good at without interference 90/142

**babygirl**: older male fictional character or celebrity seen as emotionally damaged, helpless, or vulnerable 39

**(derogatory)**: parenthetical comment humorously appended after a word that might not be expected to be derogatory 75 /127

**gyat, gyatt**: exclamation expressing surprise, excitement, or admiration (esp. on seeing someone with a large butt) 12

**rizz**: charm or attractiveness, now used as a combining form or blend component (*rizzler*, *pre-rizz-toric*) 60

**ACRONYM/INITIALISM OF THE YEAR** (ad-hoc category)

\* **FAFO** (*fuck around and find out*): warning that foolish actions will result in unwanted consequences 177

**AITA** (*am I the asshole?*): question asked to an online audience (as on Reddit) to determine if the person is at fault in a situation 47

**IYKYK** (*if you know, you know*): indication that something is a reference understood by a select group 14

**LFG** (*let's fucking go*): exhortation to action 26

**MOOP** (*matter out of place*): waste material left behind at an event (esp. Burning Man) 12

**AI-RELATED WORD THE YEAR** (ad-hoc category)

\* **stochastic parrot**: large language model that can generate plausible synthetic text without having any understanding 106/147

**ChatGPT**: name for OpenAI's chatbot, now becoming generic for generative AI systems 111/130

**hallucination**: AI-generated response containing false information presented as factual 10

**LLM** (large language model): machine-learning model trained on a vast text corpus 6

**prompt engineer**: expert in developing text prompts for generative AI models 40

**MOST CREATIVE WORD OF THE YEAR**

\* **Kenaissance**: renaissance in the wake of the *Barbie* movie's depiction of Ken (also *Kenergy*, *Kenough*) 100/161

**assholocene**: the current era of human history, defined by the ubiquity of assholes 42

**delulu**: delusion, as in *delulu is the solulu* (delusion is the solution) 72/109

**tush push**: quarterback sneak for short yardage perfected by the Philadelphia Eagles (also called *the brotherly shove*) 64

**EUPHEMISM OF THE YEAR**

\* **structurally restrictive housing**: solitary confinement (rebranded by the New York City Department of Correction) 101

**artificial intelligence**: computerized simulation of human intelligence that is not actually intelligent 60

**effective altruism**: movement ostensibly to benefit humanity, used as an excuse for spending other people's money 57

**free bird**: alternative to "empty-nester" promoted by Gwyneth Paltrow 17

**stenographer**: journalist seen as uncritically reporting statements made by officials and others in power 22

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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](http://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.

**American Dialect Society Words of Previous Years are at**

**<http://americandialect.org/woty>**