

DISTURBING VERBING AND PRE-VERBING

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As a word lover I'm beginning to accept some of the butchering that has been going on with the English language. I realize that the language will continue to change and evolve in response to the needs of the people using it, but it still took me a while to accept the fact that 'unique' is no longer unique, that 'fewer' and 'less than' are interchangeable, that bad could mean good, and the word 'like' can be used as any part of speech. I also don't cringe anymore when TV's talking heads or radio's wagging tongues contribute to the assault with daily redundancies, as with future plans, past history, forward progress, etc. Even our president recently stated, "We will get rid of redundancy and duplication that wastes your time and your money."

But verbing is something else. This one will take a little longer rehab time. We don't have a dialogue anymore, we dialogue. We don't have a strategy, we strategize. We repurpose furniture. Athletes medal, and they even podium. I heard a TV voice refer to someone being funeralized! Calvin got it right when he told Hobbs "Verbing weirds language."

Then there's pre-verbing, or taking a perfectly useful verb that doesn't need fixing and pre-fixing it into a pre-tentious redundancy. A recent robo phone call informed me that I'd been pre-selected to receive a discount on an insurance policy. Was I selected before I was selected? How does that work? Have you ever wondered how you pre-board an airplane? Or how you pre-register, get pre-approved for pre-admission to a class? How are shows pre-recorded or pre-taped? I wonder if pre-recorders cost more than recorders. Yesterday my wife was pre-occupied pre-sorting, pre-soaking, and pre-treating some laundry when she asked me to pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees for a cake to-be. I pre-tended to do it but instead, I only heated the oven. The cake was sumptuous. If I had pre-heated the oven, would the cake have been presumptuous?

I guess, as a wordo, I'm predisposed, preconditioned, predestined, preordained, and prepared for preconceived ideas about prejudging the predominant use of pre-verbs.