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## This Week's Aside

### Clichés and CFBs



How many times do you see "best of breed" -- *in a business document?*

People use the

phrase to describe a product or a service or some such thing. We think it belongs in dog-show stories. But wait...there's more. How about "think outside the box" or "at the end of the day"? Do you find these grating? We do. That's why we're working on publishing a list of contemporary clichés and content-free buzzwords (CFBs) found all too often in business writing. You know...words like "clearly" and "stakeholder" and phrases like "the bottom line" and "for what it's worth." We're even going to include alerts in our service so our clients can avoid the more tedious ones. Help us! Send your list of clichés to [contests@Proofread NOW.com](mailto:contests@ProofreadNOW.com). Some lucky helpers will earn our designer t-shirts!

## Weekly Challenge

### Growing Season...Water Your Vocabulary



Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow? With flowery words and passive verbs and adjectives

## Weekly Grammar Tip

### Rule Breaker: Never Split an Infinitive(?)



You split a banana with ice cream, fudge sauce, and whipped cream. You split an infinitive by inserting a modifier--an adverb, usually--between the *to* and the *verb*, as in "I want you *to* carefully *read* over these instructions." The

notion that this incision is grammatically unsound was first set forth in the mid-1800s, and it finds its basis in Latin, a language in which the infinitive is a one-word verb form.

Keeping infinitives intact is actually a sensible idea. Otherwise you run the risk of writing sentences that sound like this:

- We wanted to, because we felt it was important, talk to you today about our water ski catalog.

Still, no grammarian today sees any value in having an *official* sanction against splitting infinitives, and everyone agrees that it was a silly rule to adopt in the first place. Even if the rule didn't exist, split infinitives would rarely occur; that's because we rarely split them in conversation.

On the other hand, there are certain situations in which splitting the infinitive produces precisely the effect you want to produce, which is to put less emphasis on the action conveyed in the infinitive and more on the modifier.

Examples:

- I would now like you to slowly and precisely tell me what happened and how it happened. (Splitting the infinitive positions the adverbs slowly and precisely immediately before the verb tell and puts the emphasis on these two words.)

Source: *Grammar for Smart People*, by Barry Tarshis.

## Word of the Week



all in a row.

**1. parterre** : (a) a part or organ (as a seed or spore) of a plant that ensures propagation; (b) an ornamental garden with paths between the beds; (c) a close thicket of shrubs suggesting a single plant; (d) a plant normally growing on calcareous soils.

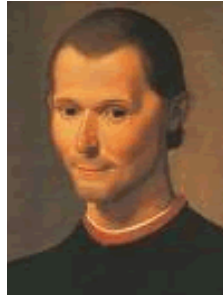
**2. bromeliad** : (a) any of the chiefly tropical American usually epiphytic plants comprising the pineapple family and including Spanish moss and various ornamentals; (b) a tall tropical widely cultivated Asian tree (Ficus elastica) of the mulberry family that is frequently dwarfed as a houseplant; (c) an Asian perennial plant (Boehmeria nivea) of the nettle family; (d) an ornamental plant (Strelitzia reginae of the family Strelitziaceae) native to southern Africa that has scapes terminating in a horizontal bract from which emerges an upright flower having three orange or yellow sepals and three very irregular blue petals.

**3. dibble** : (a) an apparatus for measuring the rate of transpiration in a plant by determining the amount of water absorbed; (b) a crop planted to prevent soil erosion and to provide humus; (c) a small hand implement used to make holes in the ground for plants, seeds, or bulbs; (d) the seed coverings and other debris separated from the seed in threshing grain.

**4. bower** : (a) a shelter (as in a garden) made with tree boughs or vines twined together; (b) an insect that bores in the woody parts of plants; (c) the layer of wood produced by a single year's growth of a woody plant; (d) rough or marshy land overgrown usually with one kind of plant.

**5. espalier** : (a) a vine or twining plant (as a rose or sweet pea) that readily grows up a support

## pejorative



**Pronunciation:** pih-JOR-a-tive

**Function:** adjective

**Etymology:** Late Latin *pejoratus*, past participle of *pejorare* to make or become worse, from Latin *pejor* worse; akin to Sanskrit *padyate* he falls, Latin *ped-, pes* foot

**Date:** 1888

**Definition:** having negative connotations; especially: tending to disparage or belittle : depreciatory

**Example:** "His approach was Machiavellian--I do not use the term in its pejorative sense."

Definition source: *Merriam-Webster's Eleventh Collegiate Dictionary.*

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that readily grows up a support or over other plants; (b) an elaborately designed garden especially of flowers or herbs; (c) a plant (as a fruit tree) trained to grow flat against a support (as a wall); (d) any of several small jumping bugs that feed on cultivated plants.

**6. cloche** : (a) a transparent plant cover used outdoors especially for protection against cold; (b) a rape plant of an improved variety having seeds that are low in erucic acid and are the source of canola oil; (c) the pod or capsule of a plant (as cotton); (d) an implement with a thin flat blade on a long handle used especially for cultivating, weeding, or loosening the earth around plants.

**7. epiphyte** : (a) a plant that derives its moisture and nutrients from the air and rain and grows usually on another plant; (b) biological diversity in an environment as indicated by numbers of different species of plants and animals; (c) the cultivation and management of ornamental and especially flowering plants; (d) a disease or injury of plants marked by the formation of lesions, withering, and death of parts (as leaves and tubers).

**8. allelopathy** : (a) the natural separation of flowers, fruit, or leaves from plants at a special separation layer; (b) the suppression of growth of one plant species by another due to the release of toxic substances; (c) an area of necrosis in a plant; (d) a science that deals with the geographical distribution of animals and plants.

**9. caudex** : (a) any of numerous very small soft-bodied homopterous insects (superfamily Aphidoidea) that suck the juices of plants; (b) the stem of a palm or tree fern; (c) a fertilizer that contains the three chief plant nutrients nitrogen,

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10 - Mister Lincoln rose.

7 - Red snapdragons.

3 - Begonias.

0 - Dandelions.

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phosphoric acid, and potash; **(d)**  
a narrow bed of planted ground  
along the edge of a garden or  
walk.

**10. blackheart** : **(a)** the usually  
black or dark purple juicy but  
seedy edible aggregate fruit of  
various brambles; **(b)** a spice that  
consists of the dried berry of an  
Indian vine ground with the black  
husk still on; **(c)** a plant (as a  
rose, blackberry, or greenbrier)  
having a usually woody and  
thorny or prickly stem; **(d)** a  
plant disease in which the central  
tissues blacken.

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**Answers:** 1:b 2:a 3:c 4:a 5:c 6:a 7:a  
8:b 9:b 10:d

**Rate Yourself:**

- **1 to 2 correct:**  
Can't even *give* your measly  
tomatoes away.
- **3 to 5 correct:**  
Grade D, but edible.
- **6 to 7 correct:**  
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- **8 to 9 correct:**  
Grocery store quality.
- **All 10 correct:**  
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