

# Be very scared (of poor word choice)

You know what is (a bit) scary? When you say or write something that you don't mean. You don't intend to do it, but you do it anyway.

Why would you do something spooky like that?

First, it's because you use words that you don't understand, or you misuse words. This is more common in spoken than in written communications, since we don't have the luxury of having a dictionary available when we talk. This type of scary mistake seems to happen a lot in television/cable news.

Here are two examples:

A political analyst/journalist who said **nonetheless** (which Webster's defines as "in spite of that") when she really meant **never mind** (which means much less or let alone).

Someone who said "from the **outset** (which means beginning or start, and can be used alone, without a modifier, such as, *from the outset*) **of...**" when he/she should have said the **onset of** (which also means beginning or commencement, and is usually used in conjunction a phrase, such as in the *onset of winter*).

It's easy to mess these up. They are very similar in meaning, and similar sounding, but yet are different words with slightly different usages and meanings.

Second, it's when you use words that are spelled similarly to what you meant to say, but are not the right word. This happens mostly in written communications, and it mostly happens because you rely on spellcheck, and you don't proofread.

Here are a couple I have seen recently:

A sentence that used **neatly** instead of **nearly**.

And even more weird, a sentence that used the word **bong** instead of **bond**.

---

Don't be ghoulish—use your words carefully—and go ahead, have a happy Halloween!

I've started collecting these, and I intend to publish them once a month. I invite you to share any you find by sending me an email at [info@deborahbrody.com](mailto:info@deborahbrody.com).