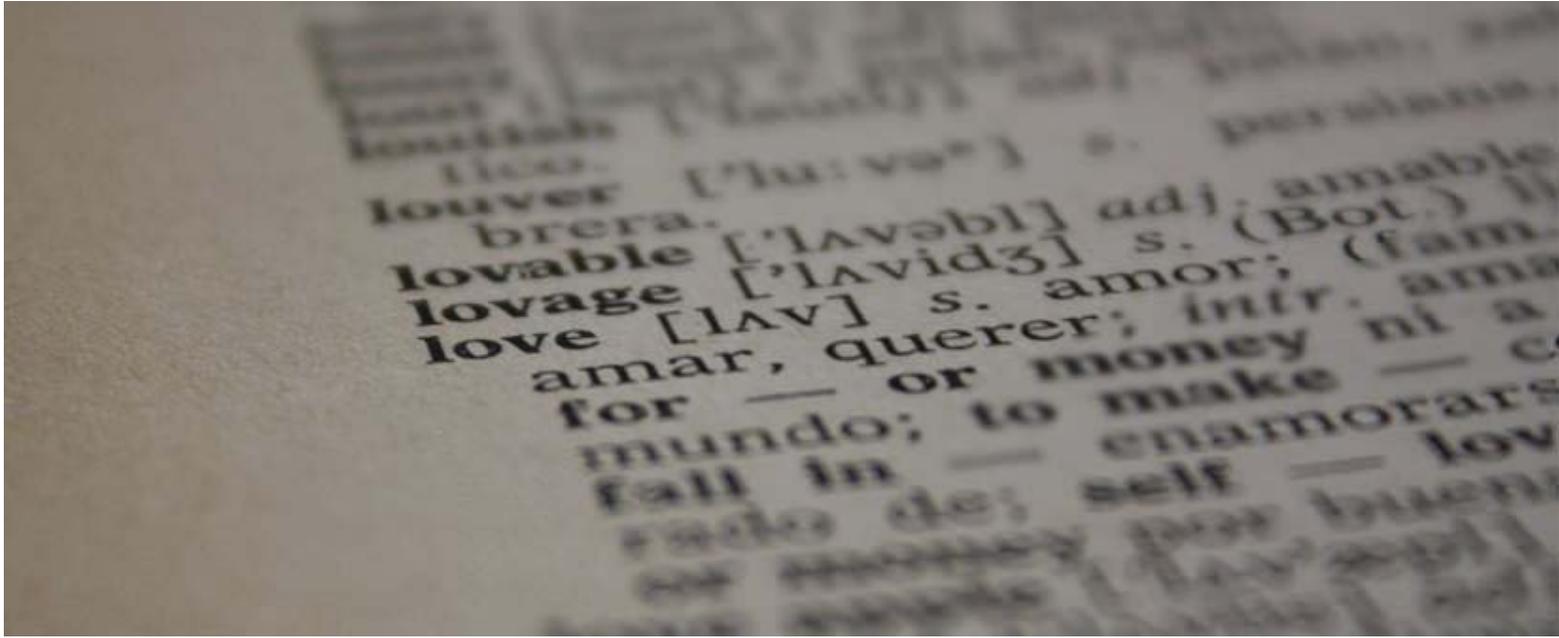


[New York Times 50 Most Challenging Words \(defined and used\)](#)



The New York Times recently published a list of [50 fancy words](#) that most frequently stump their readership. They are able to measure this data thanks to a nifty in-page lookup mechanism, which you can try [here](#). Try double-clicking the word "epicenter".

Since the NYT didn't include definitions of these words, I decided to post a job to [MediaPiston](#) to produce an article defining and using each word in the list. Voila! Just a few hours later, here it is. So avoid coming across as *jejune* and *laconic* in your speech. Dive in to this list with *alacrity*!

The New York Times 50 Fancy Words (defined and used)

1. Inchoate: just begun and so not fully formed or developed; I am glad your inchoate proposals for integrating the company were not accepted this time, thus saving us face.
2. Profligacy: recklessly wasteful; wildly extravagant, profligate behavior; Anderson's profligacy cost him his job and its better you tighten up your belt before you go the same way.
3. Sui Generis: being the only example of its kind, unique; Mr. Bill Tandy generated his sui generis theory based on little research and more hypothesis, thus finding no takers for his pet project.
4. Austerity: severe and morally strict; the quality of being austere, having no pleasures or comforts; Every major war on this planet were followed by many years of austerity.
5. Profligate: using money, resources, etc., in a way that wastes them; The firm's profligate spending only hastened its downfall.

6. Baldenfreude: Satisfaction derived from the misfortune of bald or balding individuals (coined by NYT columnist Maureen Dowd); Humpty Dumpty's antics remain a constant source of baldenfreude for children and adults alike.
7. Opprobrium: harsh criticism, contempt; His ludicrous attempts at mimicry in the office only earned him the opprobrium of his colleagues.
8. Apostates: pl; a person who abandons a belief or principle; The millionaire technocrat and his cronies were publicly derided for being apostates, after they were exposed of polluting the environment while purporting to have spent large sums for water conservation.
9. Solipsistic: the theory that the self is all that can be known to exist; His solipsistic view about life ensured that he lived in social isolation.
10. Obduracy: refusing to change in any way; Anthony's obduracy in his legal case expedited his impeachment.
11. Internecine: causing destruction to both sides; The African states' internecine conflict continues to exact a terrible toll on innocent human lives.
12. Soporific: adj; causing sleep; The soporific drug caused Tony to fall asleep in the board meeting.
13. Kristallnacht: German, night of (broken) glass : Kristall, crystal (from Middle High German, from Old High German cristalla, from Latin crystallus, crystallum; see crystal) + Nacht, night (from Middle High German naht, from Old High German; see nekw-t- in Indo-European roots); The Kristallnacht remains an infamous event in the German history.
14. Peripatetic: going from place to place; The peripatetic bards of yore propagated the words of the Holy Prophet.
15. Nascent: beginning to exist, not fully developed; In its initial stage, the nascent film industry faced harsh opposition from moral groups.
16. Desultory: going from one thing to another, without a definite plan or purpose; Garcia's desultory conversation got everybody yawning.
17. Redoubtable: deserving to be feared and respected; Mike's redoubtable instincts as a prize-fighter kept his opponents at arm's distance.
18. Hubris: excessive pride; The Empire's vanity and hubris in its exaggerated military were the reason for its downfall.
19. Mirabile Dictu: wonderful to relate; Randy's winning putt remained mirabile dictu in the golf club gossip for many years.
20. Crèches: a place where babies are looked after while their parents work, shop, etc.; Go down the Green Avenue and you will find a string of crèches and day-care centres.
21. Apoplectic: sudden loss of the ability to feel or move; adj: suffering from apoplexy; easily made angry; His son's antics on the playground left him apoplectic with rage.
22. Overhaul: to examine carefully and thoroughly and make any necessary changes or repairs; to come from behind and pass them; Michael's faster car easily overhauled the leading drivers in the F1 championship.
23. Ersatz: used as a poor-quality substitute for something else, inferior to an original item; The DJ's ersatz musical numbers were a poor rendition of Celina's work.
24. Obstreperous: very noisy or difficult to control; Andy's obstreperous behavior just after a few drinks generally caused his early exit from most parties.
25. Jejune: too simple, naïve; dull, lacking nourishment; Horrified by the senator's jejune responses to their problems, the voters guild decided to withdraw their support to him in the forthcoming elections.

26. Omertà: rule or code that prohibits speaking or revealing information, generally relates to activities of organized crime; sub; the Mafia; Henry was vowed to the code of Omertà and sealed his lips during the police interrogation.
27. Putative: generally supposed to be the thing specified; Mr Brown is referred to as the putative father in the document.
28. Manichean: A believer in Manichaeism – an ancient Iranian Gnostic religion; Roberta's Manichean beliefs found little approval in the stoic theology group discussion.
29. Canard: a false report or rumour, aerofoil designs on certain airplanes; The disturbing canard about my company's finances left me in despair.
30. Ubiquitous: seeming to be everywhere or in several places at the same time; The ubiquitous internet is both a blessing, as well as, a curse.
31. Atavistic: relating to the behavior of one's ancestors in the distant past; The chieftain urged his tribe to curb their atavistic urges and refrain from unnecessary violence.
32. Renminbi: another name for the Chinese Yuan, official currency of People's Republic of China; Chinese renmin people + bi currency; Around 1950, the Chinese government officially released the Renminbi notes for circulation.
33. Sanguine: hopeful, optimistic; She remained sanguine about our chances of success in the raffle draw.
34. Antediluvian: very old-fashioned; His antediluvian ideas are preposterous!
35. Cynosure: object or someone who serves as a focal point of attention and admiration, something that serves to guide; His wife, Catherine, remained the cynosure of all eyes throughout the evening gala.
36. Alacrity: eagerness or enthusiasm; Richard accepted her offer of marriage with alacrity.
37. Epistemic: cognitive, relating to learning, or involving knowledge; The monk's epistemic dissertation was an engaging study of New Testament beliefs.
38. Egregious: exceptional, outstanding; The NBA referee's decision was the most egregious error of judgment.
39. Incendiary: designed to set something on fire, tending to create public disturbances or violence; Amanda's incendiary remarks alienated her from the whole campus.
40. Chimera: an imaginary creature composed of the parts of several different animals, wild or impossible idea; Harry gazed awestruck at the monstrous chimera, a gigantic beast with the head of a lion and the body of a winged horse.
41. Laconic: using few words; Jerry's laconic sense of humor endeared him to the crowd.
42. Polemicist: person skilled in art of writing or speech, arguing cases forcefully; Mr. Trimble stands little chance in the public debate against the Republican polemicist candidate, Mr. Burns.
43. Comity: mutual civility; amity, an atmosphere of social harmony, the policy whereby one religious sect refrains from proselytizing the members of another sect; The Shias and Sunnis lived in perfect comity in their remote mountain hamlet.
44. Provenance: the place that something originally came from; He deals in antique furniture of doubtful provenance.
45. Sclerotic: condition in which soft tissue in the body becomes abnormally hard; Doctors were at a loss in explaining the child's unusual sclerotic condition.
46. Prescient: knowing or appearing to know about things before they happen; His prescient instincts saved him a small fortune when he sold his shares before the stock market crash.

47. Hegemony: control and leadership, by one country over others; The United States' military hegemony in the region was a source of great distress to Iqbal.
48. Verisimilitude: the appearance of being true or real; To add verisimilitude to the play, the stage is covered with snow for the winter scene.
49. Feckless: not able to manage things properly or look after oneself, not responsible enough; The McCarthy's are feckless parents with more children than they could support.
50. Demarche: step or manoeuvre in political or diplomatic affairs; Thierry's political demarche with the liberals saved the government a great deal of face in the senate hearings.