



COMMENTARY/CURRENT AFFAIRS

Fracking Vs Fracing – The End of the Debate?

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A debate that has raged for a few years now...

There are a number of topics in oil and gas that always seem to generate a healthy debate, and the fracking vs fracing disagreement is one of them. We're hoping to settle the debate once and for all.

On industry websites we see other versions as well, frac'ing and fracing are versions that might have been created to pull an emphasis away from the dreaded K. Lets get the ball rolling with the fact that my Apple Pages writing app has given a red underline to all versions but 'fracking'...

It seems that the VS situation comes from industry people knowing that it comes from the word 'fracture', and 'the media' adding the K... Can we find the truth?

Below will be a list of researched reasons, or pitches for both versions of the word. The lists will be as complete as possible, as we try to play an impartial 'devils advocate' role for both sides.

Then, there will be a final word on the topic.

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The reasons why 'fracing' is correct:



The engineering process involves hydraulic fracturing of rock, as in creating fractures or cracks.

Fracturing is not a word, and looks terrible when written with a K.

When you abbreviate a word, you don't add new letters, you remove the existing ones. Fracturing becomes fracing. Fracking isn't much of an abbreviation, with only two letters missing from the total.

Incorporating the K creates a combination of fracture, and frak. Frak, in common culture as a sanitised version of f*ck. The TV show, Battlestar Galactica popularised this first in the late 1970's, then repeatedly in future versions of the series. By adding the K, a simple scientific word morphs into a 'dirty' word, which was the reason why environmentalists and the mainstream media did it. This is a cheap and offensive negative publicity stunt.

Users of Frak/Frack will no doubt understand the low brow titillation created by words that start in an F and end in a K. FCUK is a British clothing brand that capitalised on this gutter humor. They sold countless T-Shirts just because of their logo. Whilst the quality of the fabric might have been fine, it seemed that this logo was the main reason for their success. Should science follow such a low path?

Fracture and fracturing get abbreviated to frac and fracing? Whats so complicated or confusing about that?

When you break a bone, and an X-ray shows hairline cracks, what has happened? Do you have a fracked femur? Of course not, the X-ray image will show a fracture, although you might have shouted 'FRACK' at the moment that it happened!

The industry itself has always used the non K version of the words. The experts, and people who are involved in these associated techniques every day are the ones that would be followed.

Can you imagine any other industry where this might be tolerated? What if the mainstream media decided to second guess NASA? Instead of writing about a lunar rover, they called it a 'lunar raver' to sell more newspapers, or cheapen the industries achievements? Low brow newspapers often twist words to create a laugh or intrigue, we shouldn't adopt these things as the new versions.



Even if historically, the industry used a K in the word, this should be now abandoned for the sake of the industries reputation. Re-branding happens all the time.

For example, sometimes a car manufacturer creates a car name that has a different meaning in an overseas market. Mitsubishi, a Japanese company created a car called the Pajero. In Spanish, Pajero means 'wanker' which is an insulting term. The 'Pajero' became 'Montero' in Spanish speaking markets. If hate filled activists are chanting 'frak you' or 'frak off', surely this is a similar example of where common sense should be prevailing?

The reasons why 'fracking' is correct:

It makes sense phonetically in relation to the 'c' vs 'ck' rule. Always use ck after a short vowel. Frack is like track, smack and stack.

Track, and tracking make sense, and do truck and trucking. Frack and fracking also make sense. Tracing has a completely different meaning, and is trucing even a word? Words usually need to make sense, those that do are more likely to stay in the vocabulary of the people.

Different versions of a word can have different core spellings, and in fact English has countless exceptions where academic rules are broken. Even if industry insiders refer to fracturing, it's the common usage that prevails.

In the short term, we follow dictionary definitions of a correct spelling. In the long term, the dictionaries follow the most popular practical use. This is why new words are added to revised additions.

Another example can be seen by looking at history and how languages evolve. This is why the Bible keeps getting revised, and why Shakespeare was hard to grasp for many of us at school. If it were true

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that fracing was 'the original term', it isn't anymore. If we look at what people are searching for in Google, we see a preference for the K versions.



Here's an example of some old English text from 1066:

An. M.LXVI. On þyssum geare man halgode þet mynster æt Westmynstre on Cyldamæsse dæg 7 se cyng Eadward forðferde on Twelfth mæsse æfen 7 hine mann bebyrgede on Twelftan mæssedæg innan þære niwa halgodre circean on Westmyntre 7 Harold eorl feng to Englalandes cynerice swa swa se cyng hit him geuðe 7 eac men hine þærto gecuron 7 wæs gebletsod to cyng on Twelftan mæssedæg 7 þa ylcan geare þe he cyng wæs he for ut mid sciphere togeanes Willelme ...

And it's modern translation:

1066 In this year the monastery at Westminster was hallowed on Childermas day (28 December). And king Eadward died on Twelfth-mass eve (5 January) and he was buried on Twelfth-mass day, in the newly hallowed church at Westminster. And earl Harold succeeded to the Kingdom of England, as the king had granted it to him and men had also chosen him thereto and he was blessed as king on Twelfth-mass day. And in the same year that he was king he went out with a naval force against William ...

Source: <http://www.public.asu.edu/~gelderren/hel/chron.html>

Fracking is a clear peoples winner, and at some point, fracing might be completely removed from dictionaries. Will you be the last person to talk like Shakespeare in a modern society?

There is no rule in English that states that different versions of a word must contain the core letters of the longer ones. In addition, there are many informal or slang words that can mean the same thing but have completely different letters. Idiot, goofball and moron have completely different spellings and mean roughly the same thing.

We don't see truckers complaining that the word sounds similar to a curse word. The same goes for dozens of words that could be made to sound similar to other less appealing ones. Oil and gas workers need to get over themselves if they think the 'k' is just some type of smear campaign. Frack just looks right, and sounds right. Fracing without the 'k' makes the 'c' look like an 's'.

If frac is a word in its own right, and so is frac?ing then there needs to be a k. Just like panic and panicking or mimic and mimicking. It's simple grammar. Thinking that one version sounds more rude is a little childish.

Go to the [Oxford English dictionary online](#) and type fracing... No results come up. Type in fracking and the result appears. Could it be that industry insiders are fooling themselves, or pushing back against environmentalists who twist the word into negative puns?

Industry insiders paint themselves as more qualified, or more expert than mainstream media journalists, that is understandable. What about Universities and scientists/inventors who are involved in fracking patents? Are they more qualified than the average geologist or drilling engineer?

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Here's a link to a 'high authority' paper:

<http://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=mttlr>



In fact, if you do 2 Google searches side by side, for fracing patents and fracking patents, guess which ones come up for BOTH results? The K version! Remember, Google pulls in results from real independent websites, they don't change the spelling...

Here's a screenshot of a Google Adwords keyword search (for buying adverts). I added both of the search terms, only one result came up.

Conclusion

While a case can be made on both sides of the debate, it looks like history is, and will be on the side of fracking. In fact, while researching, I didn't expect to come up with a conclusion. I expected that industry insiders were technically correct with the no k... But in reality the most popular version will evolve with the human language...

... Now I'm not so sure it seems like 'fracking' wins from both sides and gets the popular and academic vote?

Of course, there might be items missing from either lists that I've found. If this is the case then please post in the comments section. Could it be that fracing purists have been in an echo chamber for so long, no-one ever checked?

Could it be that there are pockets of local areas where fracing IS correct? A local variation of a national or international norm?



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