"Excellent."—William Safire, *New York Times*

BRYAN A. GARNER

GARNER'S MODERN ENGLISH USAGE

THE AUTHORITY ON GRAMMAR, USAGE, AND STYLE

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Other Books Written or Edited by Bryan A. Garner

Black's Law Dictionary
(Thomson Reuters, 10th ed. 2014)

The Chicago Guide to Grammar, Usage, and Punctuation
(Univ. of Chicago Press, 2016)

The Chicago Manual of Style, ch. 5, "Grammar and Usage"
(Univ. of Chicago Press, 16th ed. 2010)

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The Oxford Dictionary of American Usage & Style
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***and etc.** See **etc. (B)**.

and/or. A legal and business expression dating from the mid-19th century, *and/or* has been vilified for most of its life—and rightly so. To avoid ambiguity, don't use it. Many writers—especially lawyers—would be surprised at how easy and workable this solution is.

Or alone usually suffices. If you are offered coffee or tea, you may pick either (or, in this case, neither), or you may for whatever reason order both. This is the ordinary sense of the word, understood by everyone and universally accommodated by the simple *or*.

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and particularly. See **particularly.**

androcracy. See GOVERNMENTAL FORMS.

and which. See **which (D).**

***anecdotalist.** See **anecdotist.**

anecdote. A. Adjective Forms: *anecdotal*; *anecdotic; *anecdotical. The form *anecdotal* is standard; the other forms are NEEDLESS VARIANTS. In reference to evidence, *anecdotal* refers not to anecdotes, but to personal experiences reported by one or more people.

Current ratio (the adjectives): 371:3:1

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LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX
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2. *antidote* misused for *anecdote*: Stage 1
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The phrase *any money* can be a helpful mnemonic device for spelling, *an M on E* for pronunciation. See METATHESIS.

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Current ratio: 119:1

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anesthesiologist. See **anesthetist.**

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AmE prefers the spellings above; the BrE spellings are *anaesthetic* and *anaesthesia*. See AE.

LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX
anesthesia misused for *anesthetic*: Stage 2
Current ratio: 6:1

anesthetist; anesthesiologist. Generally, *anesthetist* will serve for "someone who administers an anesthetic." The term dates from the late 19th century. *Anesthesiologist*, of World War II vintage, refers specifically to a physician specializing in anesthesia and anesthetics.

aneurysm (= a bulged blood vessel caused by disease) is the standard spelling. **Aneurism*, an etymologically inferior spelling that was common in the 19th century, is best avoided.

Current ratio: 24:1

Angeleno; *Los Angelean. The first is the standard term for someone who hails from or lives in Los Angeles. The second is a fairly uncommon equivalent. See DENIZEN LABELS.

Current ratio: 45:1

angina pectoris (= a medical condition that causes chest pains because of a weak heart) is pronounced /an-**jī**-nə **pek**-tə-ris/. It is typically shortened to *angina*.

angst (= strong anxiety and intense unhappiness brought on by worries) is traditionally pronounced in the German way (/ahngkst/), but today /ayngkst/ or /angkst/ predominates in AmE and BrE alike. See GERMANICISMS.

anilingus; *anilinctus. The term denotes a nonstandard thing, of course, but the standard form is *anilingus*. **Anilinctus* is a NEEDLESS VARIANT that many dictionaries record but that almost never appears in print. The term dates from the mid-20th century.

Because of its etymological association with *anal*, writers frequently, by false analogy (ahem) with that word, use a deviant spelling—e.g.:

- "The list contained 20 words for sexual acts that spanned the alphabet, from *analingus* [read *anilingus*] to zooerasty." Teresa Burney, "Sex Definitions Perplex Council," *St. Petersburg Times*, 9 Sept. 1993, Pasco Times §, at 1.
- "It was Carrie and chums who persuaded a couple of my friends to experiment with *analingus* [read *anilingus*]." "Learn to Love," *Guardian*, 4 Feb. 2003, at P20.

Cf. **cunnilingus.**

LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX
anilingus misspelled **analingus*: Stage 4
Current ratio (a shocker): 1:1.5

ANIMAL ADJECTIVES. If you have an English–Latin dictionary, look up any animal to find the corresponding Latin term. Then look up that term in an unabridged English-language dictionary and you're likely to find an English adjective—perhaps rare, but there nevertheless—ending in *-ine*. Some of these, of course, are well known:

asinine	=	of, relating to, or like an ass (donkey)
bovine	=	of, relating to, or like a cow
canine	=	of, relating to, or like a dog
elephantine	=	of, relating to, or like an elephant
equine	=	of, relating to, or like a horse
feline	=	of, relating to, or like a cat
serpentine	=	of, relating to, or like a snake

Others are somewhat less well known. Aficionados of Sherlock Holmes know that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle described Holmes more than once as having an *aquiline* nose. (That means "eagle-like.") Others that are middlingly well known appear from time to time—e.g.:

- "Jagger [acted as if he were] in the midst of a shopping spree, and the lean, *leonine* singer was a pounding, preening song-and-dance man—a kindlier version of the 'Clockwork Orange' rounder he played in the '70s." Greg Kot, "Stones Are Risk-Free, but Rockers in the End," *Chicago Trib.*, 25 Sept. 1997, at 2. (*Leonine* = of, relating to, or like a lion.)
- "'You have to treat the bear like a loaded, fully explosive-laden gasoline tanker,' Tamahori said. The *ursine* star came with his longtime trainers, who oversaw him in 'The Bear.'" Steve Murray, "Call of the Wild Put 'Edge' Director into His Element," *Atlanta J.-Const.*, 5 Oct. 1997, at L2. (*Ursine* = of, relating to, or like a bear.)
- "Jonathan Heale's colored woodcuts perfectly suit the two *porcine* heroes." Michael Dirda, "Children's Books," *Wash. Post*, 5 Oct. 1997, Book World §, at 11. (*Porcine* = of, relating to, or like a pig.)

For those who dabble in SESQUIPEDALITY, the less familiar ones are equally appealing, if the sense fits:

accipitrine	*corresponds to*	hawk
anserine		goose
avine		bird
cancrine		crab
caprine, hircine		goat
cervine, damine		deer
corvine		crow; raven
crocodiline		crocodile
crotaline		rattlesnake
falconine		falcon
ferine		any wild animal
hippopotamine		hippopotamus
hirundine		swallow
hystricine, porcupine		porcupine
lacertine		lizard
larine, laridine		gull
leporine		hare
lumbricine		earthworm
lupine		wolf
murine		mouse
ovine		sheep
pardine		leopard; panther
passerine		sparrow
pavonine		peacock

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***and etc.** See **etc. (B)**.

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"Look Who's Not Talking," *Hartford Courant*, 3 Feb. 2003, at D3.

- "Ryan knew they were animal tracks—raccoons, *possum*, squirrels, birds." Denis Hamill, "No Furr-giving Ryan's Cat Lady," *Daily News* (N.Y.), 4 Feb. 2003, Suburban §, at 3.
- "But, he said, the feed and chickens can attract coyotes, *possums* and rats." Deana Poole, "Fans of Pet Chickens Plead for Zoning Change," *Olympian* (Olympia, Wash.), 4 Feb. 2003, at B1.
- "We raised chickens and ducks; the yard was host to quail, mourning doves, snakes, *possums* and a variety of other creatures." Jon Love, "Kindness Cuts Across Borders," *Fresno Bee* (South Valley ed.), 7 Feb. 2003, at 13.
- "Months later, amid an otherwise subdued dawning, a *possum* brought us both out of bed as he stalked across our deck." Neil Morgan, "It Was High Noon at Night in Cuyamacas," *San Diego Union-Trib.*, 9 Feb. 2003, at B2.

The misspellings **opposum* and **oppossum* have arisen doubtless from the influence of *opposite*—e.g.:

- "The ratlike *opposum* [read *opossum*] is prevalent in the area." Tom Long, "Time to Stock Up, Bed Down for Winter," *Boston Globe*, 2 Nov. 1994, at 77.
- "There seem to be enough people who are interested in studying the 48 discrete movements between an *opposum's* [read *opossum's*] slow-walk and its bound." Barbara Stewart, "Work on the Wild Side," *N.Y. Times*, 7 Apr. 1996, N.J. §, at 4.

LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX

1. *possum* for *opossum*: Stage 5
   Current ratio (*possums* vs. *opossums*): 1.2:1
2. *opossum* misspelled **opposum* or **oppossum*: Stage 1
   Current ratio (*opossum* vs. **oppossum* vs. **opposum*): 129:1:1

opportunistic; opportune. *Opportunistic* describes someone who is motivated by expediency and self-interest—e.g.: "Everybody—greedy players, lying owners, feeble commissioner, slimy lawyers, *opportunistic* Congressmen—pretends to tell us the precise nature of baseball's labor problems." Bob Hunter, "Steinbrenner Spends to Win, but Won't Hide His Intentions," *Columbus Dispatch*, 19 July 2002, at C3.

Opportune describes something that is convenient, fit, suitable, appropriate, or well-timed—e.g.: "This would be an *opportune* time for a Latino candidate to run for the City Council." Sam McManis, "Latinos Lack Political Pull in Concord," *S.F. Chron.*, 9 Aug. 2002, Contra Costa §, at 1.

But *opportunistic* is now sometimes misused to mean *opportune*—e.g.:

- "At a crucial and *opportunistic* [read *opportune*] moment, he [Emperor Hirohito of Japan] risked his throne to bring his people's suffering to an end." E. Barry Keehn, "The Emperor's Mask After the War," *San Diego Union-Trib.*, 24 Sept. 2000, Books §, at 1.
- "Now is the most *opportunistic* [read *opportune*] time for this type of product." Cecile B. Corral, "Suppliers Hope Retailers Get the 'Basic' Idea," *Home Textiles Today*, 26 Nov. 2001, at 13.
- "Some of Stuckey's more exciting plays couldn't have come at more *opportunistic* [read *opportune*] times." Chris Hughes, "Stuckey Will Leave Large Legacy at Northside," *Macon Telegraph*, 14 June 2002, at C1.

LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX

opportunistic misused for *opportune*: Stage 1

opposition. For an odd misusage, see **apposition.**

oppress; repress. *Oppress* = to subject (a person or a people) to inhumane or other unfair treatment; to persecute. *Repress* = (1) to keep under control; (2) to reduce (people) to subjection; (3) to inhibit or restrain; or (4) to suppress. The negative connotations of *oppress* are greater than those of *repress*.

oppressible. So spelled—preferably not *oppressable* (which has become common since about 2000). See -ABLE (A).

oppugn. See **impugn (A).**

opt (= to choose or decide) is usually followed by *for* or *to*—e.g.:

- "Few women have *opted for* careers in mathematics, engineering and the natural sciences." Mike Bowler, "In Math, Women a Plus," *Baltimore Sun*, 4 Oct. 1995, at B2.
- "After being left off the postseason roster in a decision manager Mike Hargrove called 'very difficult,' Winfield *opted to* sit in the dugout and travel on the road." John Giannone, "'Peeved' Winnie Along for Ride," *Daily News* (N.Y.), 4 Oct. 1995, at 56.

Readers may find *opt for* (a CASUALISM) a bit too jaunty for some contexts.

The phrase *opt between* is unusual and unnecessary—e.g.: "For one thing, a patient choosing medical care doesn't have the leisure, knowledge or power enjoyed by a consumer *opting* [read *choosing*] between a Big Mac and a Whopper." "Why Wait for Hillary?" *Newsweek*, 28 June 1993, at 38, 40. That example illustrates INELEGANT VARIATION, from an ill-founded fear of repeating the verb *choose*.

Opt out (of), meaning "to choose not to participate [in]," is a bit of LEGALESE that has entrenched itself in the public consciousness through class-action lawsuits, contracts, and governmental regulations—e.g.:

- "Roughly $5.2 million will be distributed by formula among the settlement class members, unless they *opt out*." Ken Harney, "Some Reverse Mortgages Are Perilous for the Unwary," *Baltimore Sun*, 9 Feb. 2003, at L1.
- "Under a new set of rules drafted by the Environmental Protection Agency, the businesses could *opt out of* the current requirement to reduce toxic fumes from their plants to the maximum extent possible." Gary Polakovic, "EPA Plans to Relax Toxic Emission Standards," *L.A. Times*, 11 Feb. 2003, News §, at 18.
- "McGrady and Hill can *opt out of* their deals after the 2004–05 season. Rivers is signed through the 2005–06 season." Jerry Brewer, "Magic Miscalculations," *Orlando Sentinel*, 11 Feb. 2003, at D1.

***opthalmology.** See **ophthalmology.**

optician. See **ophthalmologist.**

optimize (= to make the best use of) is the word, not **optimalize*—e.g.: "Insulin dosage was *optimalized* [read *optimized*] by the study physician." Julio Wainstein et al., "The Use of Continuous Insulin Delivery Systems in Severely Insulin-Resistant Patients," 24 *Diabetes Care* 1297 (1 July 2001). See NONWORDS.

LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX

**optimalize* for *optimize*: Stage 1
Current ratio (*optimized* vs. **optimalized*): 7,885:1

optimum. *Optimum* is the noun, but *optimal* is—optimally speaking—the better adjective. Hence the phrase should be *optimal advantage*, not **optimum advantage*. The reason is that there's no need for *optimal* if we use *optimum* both as a noun and as an adjective. It serves the principle of DIFFERENTIATION to distinguish between the two forms. But the adjectival *optimum* seems to be edging out *optimal* in practice, and the latter may one day be just a NEEDLESS VARIANT.

optometrist. See **ophthalmologist.**

opt out. See **opt.**

opus. Pl. *opuses*—preferably not *opera* (except in references to operatic works). See PLURALS (B).

opusculum; opuscule; *opuscle. Although the Latinate *opusculum* (= a minor literary or musical work) was long ago anglicized to *opuscule*, the latter has never occurred as frequently in English-language print sources as the former. And although one might expect *opuscules* to be more convenient to readers of English than the plural *opuscula*, in fact the more bookish term has predominated in all varieties of English. **Opuscle* is a variant form. For nonscholars, of course, all these terms are hopelessly pedantic.

-OR; -ER. See -ER (A).

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"Look Who's Not Talking," *Hartford Courant*, 3 Feb. 2003, at D3.

- "Ryan knew they were animal tracks—raccoons, *possum*, squirrels, birds." Denis Hamill, "No Furr-giving Ryan's Cat Lady," *Daily News* (N.Y.), 4 Feb. 2003, Suburban §, at 3.
- "But, he said, the feed and chickens can attract coyotes, *possums* and rats." Deana Poole, "Fans of Pet Chickens Plead for Zoning Change," *Olympian* (Olympia, Wash.), 4 Feb. 2003, at B1.
- "We raised chickens and ducks; the yard was host to quail, mourning doves, snakes, *possums* and a variety of other creatures." Jon Love, "Kindness Cuts Across Borders," *Fresno Bee* (South Valley ed.), 7 Feb. 2003, at 13.
- "Months later, amid an otherwise subdued dawning, a *possum* brought us both out of bed as he stalked across our deck." Neil Morgan, "It Was High Noon at Night in Cuyamacas," *San Diego Union-Trib.*, 9 Feb. 2003, at B2.

The misspellings **opposum* and **oppossum* have arisen doubtless from the influence of *opposite*—e.g.:

- "The ratlike *opposum* [read *opossum*] is prevalent in the area." Tom Long, "Time to Stock Up, Bed Down for Winter," *Boston Globe*, 2 Nov. 1994, at 77.
- "There seem to be enough people who are interested in studying the 48 discrete movements between an *opposum's* [read *opossum's*] slow-walk and its bound." Barbara Stewart, "Work on the Wild Side," *N.Y. Times*, 7 Apr. 1996, N.J. §, at 4.

LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX
1. *possum* for *opossum*: Stage 5
Current ratio (*possums* vs. *opossums*): 1.2:1
2. *opossum* misspelled **opposum* or **oppossum*: Stage 1
Current ratio (*opossum* vs. **oppossum* vs. **opposum*): 129:1:1

opportunistic; opportune. *Opportunistic* describes someone who is motivated by expediency and self-interest—e.g.: "Everybody—greedy players, lying owners, feeble commissioner, slimy lawyers, *opportunistic* Congressmen—pretends to tell us the precise nature of baseball's labor problems." Bob Hunter, "Steinbrenner Spends to Win, but Won't Hide His Intentions," *Columbus Dispatch*, 19 July 2002, at C3.

Opportune describes something that is convenient, fit, suitable, appropriate, or well-timed—e.g.: "This would be an *opportune* time for a Latino candidate to run for the City Council." Sam McManis, "Latinos Lack Political Pull in Concord," *S.F. Chron.*, 9 Aug. 2002, Contra Costa §, at 1.

But *opportunistic* is now sometimes misused to mean *opportune*—e.g.:

- "At a crucial and *opportunistic* [read *opportune*] moment, he [Emperor Hirohito of Japan] risked his throne to bring his people's suffering to an end." E. Barry Keehn, "The Emperor's Mask After the War," *San Diego Union-Trib.*, 24 Sept. 2000, Books §, at 1.
- "Now is the most *opportunistic* [read *opportune*] time for this type of product." Cecile B. Corral, "Suppliers Hope Retailers Get the 'Basic' Idea," *Home Textiles Today*, 26 Nov. 2001, at 13.
- "Some of Stuckey's more exciting plays couldn't have come at more *opportunistic* [read *opportune*] times." Chris Hughes, "Stuckey Will Leave Large Legacy at Northside," *Macon Telegraph*, 14 June 2002, at C1.

LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX
opportunistic misused for *opportune*: Stage 1

opposition. For an odd misusage, see **apposition.**

oppress; repress. *Oppress* = to subject (a person or a people) to inhumane or other unfair treatment; to persecute. *Repress* = (1) to keep under control; (2) to reduce (people) to subjection; (3) to inhibit or restrain; or (4) to suppress. The negative connotations of *oppress* are greater than those of *repress*.

oppressible. So spelled—preferably not *oppressable* (which has become common since about 2000). See -ABLE (A).

oppugn. See **impugn (A).**

opt (= to choose or decide) is usually followed by *for* or *to*—e.g.:

- "Few women have *opted for* careers in mathematics, engineering and the natural sciences." Mike Bowler, "In Math, Women a Plus," *Baltimore Sun*, 4 Oct. 1995, at B2.
- "After being left off the postseason roster in a decision manager Mike Hargrove called 'very difficult,' Winfield *opted to* sit in the dugout and travel on the road." John Giannone, "'Peeved' Winnie Along for Ride," *Daily News* (N.Y.), 4 Oct. 1995, at 56.

Readers may find *opt for* (a CASUALISM) a bit too jaunty for some contexts.

The phrase *opt between* is unusual and unnecessary—e.g.: "For one thing, a patient choosing medical care doesn't have the leisure, knowledge or power enjoyed by a consumer *opting* [read *choosing*] between a Big Mac and a Whopper." "Why Wait for Hillary?" *Newsweek*, 28 June 1993, at 38, 40. That example illustrates INELEGANT VARIATION, from an ill-founded fear of repeating the verb *choose*.

Opt out (of), meaning "to choose not to participate [in]," is a bit of LEGALESE that has entrenched itself in the public consciousness through class-action lawsuits, contracts, and governmental regulations—e.g.:

- "Roughly $5.2 million will be distributed by formula among the settlement class members, unless they *opt out*." Ken Harney, "Some Reverse Mortgages Are Perilous for the Unwary," *Baltimore Sun*, 9 Feb. 2003, at L1.
- "Under a new set of rules drafted by the Environmental Protection Agency, the businesses could *opt out of* the current requirement to reduce toxic fumes from their plants to the maximum extent possible." Gary Polakovic, "EPA Plans to Relax Toxic Emission Standards," *L.A. Times*, 11 Feb. 2003, News §, at 18.
- "McGrady and Hill can *opt out of* their deals after the 2004–05 season. Rivers is signed through the 2005–06 season." Jerry Brewer, "Magic Miscalculations," *Orlando Sentinel*, 11 Feb. 2003, at D1.

***opthalmology.** See **ophthalmology.**

optician. See **ophthalmologist.**

optimize (= to make the best use of) is the word, not **optimalize*—e.g.: "Insulin dosage was *optimalized* [read *optimized*] by the study physician." Julio Wainstein et al., "The Use of Continuous Insulin Delivery Systems in Severely Insulin-Resistant Patients," 24 *Diabetes Care* 1297 (1 July 2001). See NONWORDS.

LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX
**optimalize* for *optimize*: Stage 1
Current ratio (*optimized* vs. **optimalized*): 7,885:1

optimum. *Optimum* is the noun, but *optimal* is—optimally speaking—the better adjective. Hence the phrase should be *optimal advantage*, not **optimum advantage*. The reason is that there's no need for *optimal* if we use *optimum* both as a noun and as an adjective. It serves the principle of DIFFERENTIATION to distinguish between the two forms. But the adjectival *optimum* seems to be edging out *optimal* in practice, and the latter may one day be just a NEEDLESS VARIANT.

optometrist. See **ophthalmologist.**

opt out. See **opt.**

opus. Pl. *opuses*—preferably not *opera* (except in references to operatic works). See PLURALS (B).

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