

The Word of the Year: A Year in Eight Words (and Some More) [B2]

L'emergere dell'intelligenza artificiale ha influenzato le parole che hanno caratterizzato l'anno 2023. Per ora, tuttavia, sono ancora le persone e le loro relazioni sociali ed affettive a determinare l'evoluzione del linguaggio e la sua sorprendente creatività.



Did you start using any new words in 2023, or [notice](#) people using an old word in a new way? Every year since 2004, Oxford Languages (publishers of the Oxford English Dictionary) select their word of the year. The idea is to find a word or expression that became popular because it reflected the [mood](#) or [concerns](#) of that year. This time, Oxford Languages made a [shortlist](#) of eight words and asked the public to choose four of them. Their expert lexicographers then made the final decision. And for 2023, the winner was... ‘rizz’! Let’s take a look at what ‘rizz’ and the other words on the Oxford [shortlist](#) mean.

1. RIZZ

The winning term ‘rizz’ evolved out of social media and is short for ‘charisma’. It’s a [teen slang](#) word meaning intense [charm](#) or romantic appeal, especially, but not exclusively, in men. The term got really popular in June after Spider-Man actor Tom Holland [claimed](#) in an interview: “[I have no rizz whatsoever](#)”. His fans, presumably, wouldn’t agree.

2. PROMPT

In the year when millions of people began using the artificial intelligence tool ChatGPT, it’s not surprising that the word ‘prompt’ has made it onto the [shortlist](#). A ‘prompt’ is an instruction given to an artificial intelligence program, algorithm, etc., which determines or influences the content it generates. It’s the information you put in to get a response.

3. SITUATIONSHIP

A ‘situationship’ — a [blend](#) of ‘situation’ and ‘relationship’ — is a type of romantic or sexual relationship that seems particularly popular among Gen Z (young people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s). A situationship doesn’t have to be exclusive and, above all, it doesn’t have to be forever. If a situationship works for now, that’s fine. If it ends next month, that’s also fine. In a situationship, convenience is more important than [commitment](#).

4. SWITFIE

According to a recent survey, around 50 per cent of the adult population of the US are swifties. And there are many millions in Europe, too. In case you’re not among them, a swiftie is a dedicated fan of Taylor Swift, the thirty-three-year-old American singer-songwriter. Swift has a reputation for looking after her fans, and they love her for it. Her recent world tour made more money than any other music tour in history.

5. BEIGE FLAG

When talking about relationships, a ‘beige flag’ is a character [trait](#) in a partner, or potential partner, that is neither good (like a green flag) nor bad (like a red flag). You don’t love it or hate it, it’s just a [quirk](#) of who that person is. Tiktok #beigeflag is full of examples. Here’s one: “My boyfriend puts mayonnaise on fried eggs.” This may seem weird, but it’s not a reason to end the relationship.

6. DE-INFLUENCING

‘De-influencing’ is the practice of encouraging people not to buy particular products, or to reduce their consumption of material goods. De-influencing is a reaction against the thousands of influencers on social media who try to convince us to buy the latest ‘must-have’ cosmetics, phones, holidays etc. De-influencers do exactly the opposite. Check out some examples of de-influencing in action on TikTok #deinfluencing.

7. HEAT DOME

This is the only climate change term on the [shortlist](#). A ‘heat [dome](#)’ refers to a persistent high-pressure weather system that traps hot air in a particular geographical area. Heat [dome](#)s caused the extreme heatwaves that were experienced in many parts of the world in 2023.

8. PARASOCIAL

The adjective ‘parasocial’ describes the kind of intimacy a fan can feel for a celebrity. Many Swifties, for example, have a parasocial relationship with Taylor Swift. Of course the relationship is [one-sided](#) and unreciprocated. And yet, the fan comes to feel (falsely) that they know the celebrity, as if they were a friend.

OTHER WORDS OF THE YEAR

Other dictionaries have also chosen their word of the year. Merriam Webster, a dictionary based in the US, selected from words that saw a [spike](#) in online searches during 2023. Their choice was ‘authentic’, meaning real and genuine but also true to one’s personality. It’s not a new word, of course, but it has been used much more than usual in connection with artificial intelligence, celebrity culture, identity, and social media. The opposite, ‘deepfake’, was also on their [shortlist](#). A deepfake is a fake image, audio or video that has been generated digitally using deep learning, a type of artificial intelligence. The Cambridge Dictionary’s word of the year was also related to false impressions and artificial intelligence. Its

word, ‘hallucinate’, refers to a tendency of such tools to generate and then insist on [misleading](#) or completely made-up information. Sometimes these ‘hallucinations’ are obviously [nonsensical](#), but they can also seem plausible. Artificial intelligence also inspired Collins Dictionary’s word of the year 2023: its choice was simply the acronym ‘AI’.

THE WORDS OF THE PAST TWENTY YEARS

blog chav integrity sudoku Truthiness bovered w00t carbon footprint [bailout](#) [credit crunch](#) [admonish](#) simples austerity big society pragmatic [squeezed](#) middle socialism and capitalism omnishambles science selfie culture vape -ism 😊 (face with tears of joy) [surreal](#) post-truth feminism youthquake justice toxic they climate emergency pandemic [no single word; see box below] vaccine [vax](#) gaslighting goblin mode

2020: THE YEAR THAT WOULD NOT FIT INTO ONE WORD

Since 2004, Oxford Languages is determined to select a word in which to encapsulate each year, but 2020 proved to be impossible to contain. This tumultuous year expanded way beyond what any single word could [convey](#) which led the institution to give it sixteen of them! The events of 2020 were as dramatic as they were diverse, and deserved to be given a wide a range of words if they were to be represented: ‘impeachment’ and ‘[acquittal](#)’ were a reminder of President Donald Trump’s impeachment [trial](#); ‘Black Lives Matter’, ‘cancel culture’ and ‘BIPOC’ (acronym for ‘Black, Indigenous, and people of colour’) are a [testament to](#) the politicisation experienced —especially in the US— around issues of racism after the murder of a black man by the name of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer. However, at a global level, a few words became common [currency](#) for all of us: ‘coronavirus’, ‘Covid-19’, ‘lockdown’ or ‘social distancing’ [epitomise](#) an event most of us never thought we would experience: a global pandemic. **w00t** interjection used to express joy, approval, or excited enthusiasm. - **ism** noun 1 a distinctive doctrine, cause, or theory. 2 an oppressive and especially discriminatory attitude or belief. **gaslighting** noun psychological manipulation of a person usually over an extended period of time that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories and typically leads to confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, uncertainty of one’s emotional or mental stability, and a dependency on the perpetrator. **chav** noun, British English, offensive, informal an offensive word for somebody, usually a young person, who you think [behaves](#), dresses or speaks in a way that shows their low social class and lack of education. **bovered** adjective, British colloquial (often humorous) colloquial way of saying ‘[bothered](#)’ or ‘[bothered](#) by something.’ This term gained popularity through a comedic sketch

on the British television show The Catherine Tate Show, where the character Lauren Cooper, played by Catherine Tate, used the phrase “Am I bovvered?” as a [dismissive](#) and indifferent response. **simples** adjective, British colloquial (often humorous) used (usually immediately after a statement giving a solution to a problem) to indicate that something is very simple or [straightforward](#) to do. Popularised by an advertising campaign on British television for a price comparison website. [squeezed](#) middle noun the section of society regarded as particularly affected by inflation, [wage freezes](#), and cuts in public spending during a time of economic difficulty, consisting principally of those people on low or middle [incomes](#). **omnishambles** noun a situation, especially in politics, which has been very badly managed, with many mistakes and a great lack of understanding. **youthquake** noun a significant cultural, political, or social change [arising](#) from the actions or influence of young people. **goblin mode** noun a type of behaviour which is unapologetically self-indulgent, [lazy](#), [slovenly](#), or [greedy](#), typically in a way that rejects social norms or expectations.’

Glossary

- **teen slang** = gergo giovanile
- **charm** = fascino
- **trait** = tratto
- **spike** = punta
- **epitomise** = rappresentare
- **shortlist** = selezione
- **trial** = giudizio
- **currency** = valuta
- **dismissive** = dispregiativa
- **claimed** = affermare
- **incomes** = reddito
- **dome** = cupola
- **concerns** = preoccupazioni
- **vax** = vaccino
- **squeezed** = spremere
- **arising** = emergere
- **slovenly** = trascurato
- **notice** = notare
- **quirk** = peculiarità
- **nonsensical** = insensate
- **credit crunch** = stretta creditizia
- **behaves** = comportarsi
- **straightforward** = diretto
- **wage** = salario
- **freezes** = congelamento
- **blend** = fusione
- **lazy** = pigro
- **one-sided** = unilaterale
- **testament to** = essere testimonianza di
- **bothered** = preoccupato
- **mood** = stato d'animo
- **misleading** = ingannevole
- **bailout** = salvataggio finanziario
- **admonish** = rimproverare
- **surreal** = surreale
- **convey** = comunicare
- **acquittal** = assoluzione
- **I have no rizz whatsoever** = non ho assolutamente niente di
- **greedy** = avido
- **commitment.** = impegno