

# Neologism

## Definition of Neologism

A neologism is a newly-created word used in expressions, in both writing and speaking. However, all neologisms are not entirely new. Some neologisms are built from new uses of old words, while others are combinations of old and new words. For instance, in the excerpt “Pardon, old father, my mistaking eyes that have been so bedazzled with the sun that everything I look on seemeth green” (*The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare), Shakespeare has coined a word “bedazzled” to express the gleam of sunlight in describing rhinestone-embellished clothing.

## Popular Use of Neologism

### Banana Republic

In *Cabbages and Kings*, a collection of short stories by O. Henry, the author introduced the term “banana republic.” Later, politicians in the U.S. exploited this term in referring to unstable countries that depend upon exported products.

### Freelancer

Sir Walter Scott, in his novel *Ivanhoe*, devised the term “Free Lancers” for people hired as militants.

### Doormat

Charles Dickens first introduced the term “doormat” in his novel *Great Expectations*, as, “His rookie flailing set back the peace process (such as it was) and made him look like a doormat.” Doormat refers to a thick piece of cloth placed on floor in front of the door to clean shoes.

## Use of Neologism in Internet Vernacular

### Twitter

The onomatopoeic word “twitter” was first used by Geoffrey Chaucer.

## Yahoo

Yahoo is one of the most popular terms in today's internet world. The word first appeared in Jonathan Swift's novel *Gulliver's Travels*.

## Types of Neologism

There are a number of ways for coining new words, using a variety of neologism types. A few of these include:

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### Blending Words or Portmanteaus

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This type is a blend of two words that create a completely new word such as:

Smoke + fog = smog

Breakfast + lunch = brunch

Spoon + fork = spork

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### Transferred Words

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These words are derived from other languages, adjusted in English such as, "herbs" has been taken from French *herbes*.

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### Derived Words

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These words use Latin and ancient Greek phrases that match with their English counterparts such as, "village," "villager," and "villa" have all been derived from the Latin word *villa*.

## Examples of Neologism in Literature

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### Example #1: *NCIS* (by Michael Weatherly)

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McGee: What are we looking for?

Abby: Just anything that's hinky.

McGee: Why do you use that word?

Abby: What word?

McGee: Hinky. It's a made-up word.

Abby: All words are made-up words."

In this excerpt, the underlined word "hinky" is a coined word that is also a police [slang](#), which means nervous or uneasy.

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### **Example #2: *Jabberwocky* (by Lewis Carroll)**

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"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?  
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"  
He chortled in his joy."

In this poem, Carroll has made up the words "calloh, callay" to express a laughing tone that comes between a snort and a chuckle.

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### **Example #3: *If I Ran the Zoo* (by Dr. Seuss)**

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"And then, just to show them, I'll sail to Ka-Troo  
And Bring Back an It-Kutch a Preep and a Proo  
A Nerkle a Nerd and a Seersucker, too!"

Here "Nerd" is a nickname for a creature with long mustaches, wild hair, red face, and yellow skin. It refers to a person having high-intelligence, but lacking social skills.

## **Function of Neologism**

Neologism shows us that new words can be added to any language. It is not something to stay stagnant. Language constantly evolves and changes with new additions, deletions, and emissions. The task of a good neologism is to create new meanings of some abstract or material ideas that are evolving in new environments. It happens quite often that old words fail to convey the meanings of new circumstances. New words are coined to reflect the changing moods of the time. If a neologism does not convey a true meaning of the new situation, it soon ceases to exist.

