

# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

by

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This document is approximately 11,216 words long.

This dictionary is dedicated to  
the memory of Mere Keep.

My essays are available on [Pharos](#).

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*caveat lector*

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# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## Introduction

An amazing feature of the way that people use the English Language is that a listener can correctly understand what a speaker intended to say without either of them having the least notion of what the speaker actually said. —Tuesday, February 1, 2011  
Sam Aurelius Milam III

.... In the first place, very little thinking was ever done in English; it is not a language suited to logical thought. Instead, it's an emotive lingo beautifully adapted to concealing fallacies. A rationalizing language, not a rational one.... —Lazarus Long  
in *Time Enough for Love*, by Robert A. Heinlein

Back during the 1980s, I established Mere Keep. The name came right out of a dictionary.

**keep**, *n.* 4. A stronghold in the middle of a castle, the last resort in a siege ....

**keep**, *v.t.* ...[ME. *kepen*, *kipen*; AS. *cepan*, to keep, observe, await.] 1. To hold; to retain in one's power or possession; not to lose or part with .... 2. To have in custody for security or preservation .... 3. To preserve; to retain ....

**mere**, *a.* [L. *merus*, unmixed.] 1. Pure; unadulterated; free from admixture. [Obs.]

**mere**, *n.* [ME. *meer*, *mere*; AS. *gamære*, a boundary, limit.] A boundary.

**mere**, *v.t.* and *v.i.* To divide; to limit; to set bounds. [Obs.]

— all from *Webster's Universal Dictionary of the English Language*, 1910

Using those old definitions, a mere can be regarded as a pure, unadulterated boundary or limit. A keep can be regarded as the act of holding or retaining something in a safe condition, or a place for doing so. Thus, Mere Keep was a sanctuary for the protection of boundaries. The boundaries that I'd intended to protect at Mere Keep were the boundaries between ideas. I had in mind the boundaries between such ideas as freedom and slavery, rights and privileges, currency and money, sin and crime, God and religion, diversity and complexity, law and legislation, brainwashing and education, and anarchy and chaos. Such boundaries exist as the differences between the ideas that they separate. They're understood as the differences in the meanings of the words that represent the ideas. The disappearance of such a boundary represents the loss of understanding of the things that ought to be separated by the boundary but that are no longer understood as being different from one another. Such a loss of understanding is revealed by confusion in the use of the words that ought to express the differences between the ideas. Mere Keep was intended as a place for the discovery, exploration, and protection of such boundaries.

The sloppy use of words both reflects and encourages sloppy thinking. A while back, I was riding somewhere with a friend and I made the comment that, in the USA, there are very few things that a man can do without permission. My friend quickly announced, "I don't need permission to drive this car!" I tried to explain to

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him that his driver's license represents his permission to drive the car. He didn't reply. I think that he didn't understand me.

Permission represents the difference between freedom and slavery. Maybe to my friend *freedom* and *slavery* are synonyms. In that case, permission is meaningless to him. If both words mean the same thing to him then, for him, the idea of permission won't even exist because it's a non-existent boundary between identical things. When the words mean the same thing, then the ideas that they express become the same. When that happens, one of the ideas will eventually disappear. Privileges become rights. Currency becomes money. Brainwashing becomes education.

By 2050—earlier, probably—all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared. The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron—they'll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be. Even the literature of the Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like “freedom is slavery” when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will *be* no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.

—from *1984*, Section One, Chapter V  
by George Orwell

I tried to defend Mere Keep but, eventually, the gestapo thugs won. That story is available on *Pharos*, in my memoir [Outward Bound](#) under the heading *The Fall of Mere Keep*. In October of 1996, I was forced to retreat. I moved to Mecham's Farm. However, even after the fall of Mere Keep I didn't abandon the objective to which Mere Keep had been dedicated. To this day, I continue to advocate the distinctions between the meanings of words and the understanding that's expressed by those distinctions. This dictionary is a small part of the legacy of Mere Keep.

### My Favorite Idiom

To the best of my recollection, this statement came from one of those crime scene investigation programs, of which there are far too many. Anyway, the woman was talking about a suspect that they'd “interrogated”. She said, “He sang like a bird right off the bat!”

### My Favorite Blunder

The writers of the Declaration of Independence famously stated that all men are created equal. Any moron can see that it's a stupid statement. Worse yet, it addresses the wrong subject. They ought not to have been concerned with the people, but with the government. Instead of declaring falsely that all men are created equal, they should have required that the government must be impartial.

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## — A —

Ability vs. Right	<p>An ability is something that you're capable of doing. A right is an ability the exercise of which will be generally or customarily approved or at least tolerated.</p> <p>See my essay <a href="#"><i>The Ravings of a Mad Man</i></a>.</p>
Adolescent vs. Child vs. Pedophilia	<p>An adolescent is a minor who has achieved puberty. A child is a minor who hasn't yet achieved puberty. Pedophilia doesn't have anything to do with adolescents, but with children. A man who has a sexual attraction to adolescents isn't a pedophile. A man who has a sexual attraction to children is a pedophile. A 15-year-old female isn't a child. She's an adolescent.</p>
Aim At vs. Target	<p>You don't target something. <i>Target</i> is a noun. You aim at something. <i>Aim</i> is a verb. The target is the thing at which you aim.</p>
Anarchy vs. Chaos vs. Government	<p>Anarchy is order achieved without coercion. Chaos is lack of order. Government is order achieved coercively.</p>
Appearance vs. Look	<p>A thing doesn't have a look. You look at the thing. The thing has an appearance.</p>
Arguable vs. Inarguable	<p>Arguable means that a thing is open to debate. Inarguable means that it is settled beyond question.</p>
Atomic Energy vs. Nuclear Energy	<p>The use of the term <i>atomic energy</i> instead of the term <i>nuclear energy</i> is a silly mistake. It isn't <b>atomic</b> energy. Atomic energy comes from rearranging atoms, like when carbon atoms combine with oxygen atoms to form carbon dioxide and release heat. A campfire is atomic energy. It's <b>nuclear</b> energy. Nuclear energy comes from rearranging nuclei, like when the nucleus of a uranium atom splits into two or more smaller nuclei, releasing energy.</p> <p>Also, regardless of the ignorant babbling of Herr Bush to the contrary, it isn't nu-cu-lar energy. It's nu-cle-ar energy.</p>
Automatic Teller Machine	<p>The abbreviation ATM stands for automatic teller machine. The M in ATM stands for machine. Thus, it's either an ATM or an AT machine. There isn't any such thing as an ATM machine.</p>

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## — B —

Back-to-Back	The announcers on the television like to say that they're going to show movies back-to-back. The only way to do that would be to show the second movie in reverse. They don't show movies back-to-back. They show them back-to-front.
Bit vs. Drill	A drill is a tool with some kind of a motor, used to turn a bit, for drilling a hole. A bit is a cutting tool that's installed into a drill.
Blimp vs. Dirigible	A blimp is a lighter-than-air craft that lacks a rigid structure. It's held in shape by the pressure of air being forced into it. A dirigible is held in shape by a rigid internal structure.
Blocks vs. Bricks	Blocks are made with cement. Bricks are made with clay.
Bloom vs. Blossom	In my own personal vocabulary, bloom is a verb and blossom is a noun. Blossoms bloom.
Blossom vs. Bloom	In my own personal vocabulary, bloom is a verb and blossom is a noun. Blossoms bloom.
Born vs. Hatched	Birds aren't born. They hatch.
Bricks vs. Blocks	Blocks are made with cement. Bricks are made with clay.
Bro Show	I'm putting this term into my dictionary for the record. The date is Friday, May 17, 2013. When this term eventually becomes widely used, this will be my proof that I invented the term. It is the counterpoint or opposite of chick flick. A chick flick is a movie that women will enjoy. A bro show is a movie that men will enjoy.
BUTL	BUTL is from <u>B</u> light <u>U</u> pon <u>T</u> he <u>L</u> and. It means new houses, new apartments, new shopping malls, new office buildings, new free-ways, etc., when there are already far too many of them.

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## — C —

- Can vs. May *Can* designates ability. *May* designates permission.  
“Mother, may I go play with Sally?”  
“Yes, Johnny, but only if you can avoid getting her pregnant.”
- Can vs. Will *Can* designates ability. *Will* designates cooperation or intention.  
“Johnny, will you come over for a visit?”  
“Yes, Sally, I will come over for a visit, but only if you can avoid becoming pregnant.”
- Capture vs. Photograph If you take a picture of a thing, then you haven't captured the thing. You've photographed the thing. You haven't captured the thing unless you have it in a box or a cage.
- Capture vs. Record If you make an audio recording or a video recording of a thing, then you haven't captured the thing. You've made a recording of the thing. You haven't captured the thing unless you have it in a box or a cage.
- Cash vs. Checks Cash is good no matter who gives it to you. A check invokes an identity requirement.
- Caveat Lector *Latin*, let the reader beware.
- Cement vs. Concrete Concrete is made of sand, gravel, and cement. You don't make driveways and sidewalks out of cement. You make them out of concrete. Cement is part of the concrete.
- Center vs. Epicenter The center of a thing is the location within the thing that, as nearly as possible, is the same distance from all of the thing's edges. An epicenter is the location, underground, of the source of an earthquake or the location, on the surface of the ground, directly above the source of the earthquake. I've encountered both usages. Whatever the case, it's foolish for some nitwit masquerading as a reporter to speak of, for example, the epicenter of a riot. There isn't any such thing as the epicenter of a riot. If the nitwit AKA reporter intends to refer to the source of the riot then he ought to use the word *source*. If he intends to refer to the cause of the riot then he ought to use the word *cause*. If he intends to refer to the center of the riot, then he ought to use the word *center*. The word *epicenter* applies to earthquakes. *Epicenter* and *center* are not synonyms.
- Certified vs. Qualified Qualification has to do with knowledge or ability. A person is qualified to do a thing if he has the knowledge or the ability to do it. A qualified person might or might not be certified. Certification has to do with permission or authorization. A person is certified to do a thing if he has obtained the permission or the authorization to do it from some agency or institution. A certified person might or might not be qualified..
- Chaos vs. Government vs. Anarchy Anarchy is order achieved without coercion. Chaos is lack of order. Government is order achieved coercively.
- Cheap Hotel Pants Women wear cheap hotel pants — no ballroom.

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Checks vs. Cash	Cash is good no matter who gives it to you. A check invokes an identity requirement.
Child vs. Adolescent vs. Pedophilia	An adolescent is a minor who has achieved puberty. A child is a minor who hasn't yet achieved puberty. Pedophilia doesn't have anything to do with adolescents, but with children. A man who has a sexual attraction to adolescents isn't a pedophile. A man who has a sexual attraction to children is a pedophile. A 15-year-old female isn't a child. She's an adolescent.
Civilization vs. Society	So far as I'm aware, there has never yet been a human society that was actually a civilization. They all seem to have been populated mostly by uncivilized people, lacking understanding or humility. That disqualifies those societies from being called civilizations. They're societies, but not civilizations.
Complexity vs. Diversity	Complexity is many things happening in series. Diversity is many things happening in parallel.
Concrete vs. Cement	Concrete is made of sand, gravel, and cement. You don't make driveways and sidewalks out of cement. You make them out of concrete. Cement is part of the concrete.
Condition vs. Disease	A disease is contagious. A condition isn't contagious. Predictably, the dictionaries define each in terms of the other. I'm amazed that medical people can understand each other at all. Tuberculosis is a disease. Celiac is a condition.
Conspiracy	Conspiracy is an exercise of the freedoms of thought, speech, and assembly.
Country and Western Music	I don't know why people put country music and western music in the same category. Country music and western music are as different from one another as are classical music and doo wop.
Cubic vs. Square	A cube is a three dimensional shape. A square is a two dimensional shape. A box isn't square. It's cubic.
Cycle vs. Stroke in Reference to an Internal Combustion Engine	Generally, a stroke is a change from one location or condition to another location or condition. An example might be the movement that your hand makes when you stroke a cat. Generally, a cycle is a recurring change from one location or condition to at least one other location or condition, and possibly to several other locations or conditions, with an eventual return to the original location or condition. An example might be the cycle of the seasons. In an internal combustion engine, a stroke is the movement of a piston from one end of its cylinder to the other end of its cylinder. A cycle is the movement of a piston and all of the associated moving parts, crank shaft, cam shaft, valves, other pistons, and so forth, from one configuration, through their entire range of movement, and back to the same original configuration. In some internal combustion engines, a piston will make two strokes while the piston and its associated parts move through one complete cycle. In other internal combustion engines, a piston will make four strokes during the complete cycle. Thus, the terminology of referring to an internal combustion engine as either a two-

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cycle engine or a four-cycle engine is incorrect. All such engines are one-cycle engines. The correct term for a so-called two-cycle engine is that it is a two-stroke engine. That is, the piston makes two strokes per cycle. Similarly, the correct term for a so-called four-cycle engine is that it is a four-stroke engine. In such an engine, a piston makes four strokes per cycle.

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## — D —

- Deck vs. Porch** A deck is a floor on a boat or a ship. A floor attached to the back of a house isn't a deck. It's a porch.
- Decriminalize vs. Legalize** To legalize some activity or behavior is to declare by statute that the activity or behavior is permitted. Such legalization is usually a euphemism for control and regulation. To decriminalize some activity or behavior is to repeal any and all statutes or regulations that address the activity or behavior. That has the effect of moving the activity or behavior completely out of the purview of government.
- Definition** A definition should be concise, general, and unambiguous.
- Despotism vs. Jurisdiction**
- despotism  
**1 a** : rule by a despot **b** : despotic exercise of power  
**2 a** : a system of government in which the ruler has unlimited power : ABSOLUTISM **b** : a despotic state  
—*Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary* (Digital Edition)
- jurisdiction  
**1** : the power, right, or authority to interpret and apply the law  
**2 a** : the authority of a sovereign power to govern or legislate **b** : the power or right to exercise authority : CONTROL  
**3** : the limits or territory within which authority may be exercised  
synonyms see POWER  
—*Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary* (Digital Edition)
- The two words appear, at first glance, to be almost synonymous. The essence of both definitions is the exercise of power. Current usage fails to properly distinguish between the meanings of the two words. The distinction is legitimacy. That is, despotism involves the illegitimate exercise of power. Jurisdiction involves the legitimate exercise of power. Thus, although both words denote an exercise of power, they are mutually exclusive regarding the legitimacy of that exercise.
- Difficult vs. Hard** Hard is a surface or object that is rigid, unyielding, firm, that sort of thing. Difficult is an activity or project that requires considerable effort or determination.
- Dirigible vs. Blimp** A blimp is a lighter-than-air craft that lacks a rigid structure. It's held in shape by the pressure of air being forced into it. A dirigible is held in shape by a rigid internal structure.
- Discover vs. Invent** A thing that already exists can be discovered. A thing that doesn't yet exist might be invented. If a thing that already exists is merely discovered, then that isn't an invention. It should not be patentable. If an explorer discovers a river, then he didn't invent it. He only discovered it. Patenting the river is a stupid idea.

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Discrimination vs. Prejudice	<p>Discrimination is the process of distinguishing between things that are different from one another. It can be irrelevant. An example is the ability to tell the difference in flavor, blindfolded, between Coke and Pepsi. It can be useful. An example is the ability to tell the difference between poisonous snakes and the other kind. In general, discrimination is morally neutral.</p> <p>Prejudice is a difference in behavior and possibly a difference in attitude (I'm not sure about that) according to the differences between things that are different from one another. Prejudice can be bad, morally neutral, or good. It's bad when it results in harm. Racial prejudice is an example. It's morally neutral when the results are irrelevant. Always choosing vanilla ice cream, instead of chocolate ice cream, is an example. It's good when the results are beneficial. Killing poisonous snakes and preserving the other kind is an example.</p>
Disease vs. Condition	<p>A disease is contagious. A condition isn't contagious. Predictably, the dictionaries define each in terms of the other. I'm amazed that medical people can understand each other at all.</p> <p>Tuberculosis is a disease. Celiac is a condition.</p>
Diversity vs. Complexity	<p>Complexity is many things happening in series. Diversity is many things happening in parallel.</p>
Drill vs. Bit	<p>A drill is a tool with some kind of a motor, used to turn a bit, for drilling a hole. A bit is a cutting tool that's installed into a drill.</p>
Dry Ice	<p>Isn't it strange how ice can be dry without being dry ice?</p>
Drywall Joint Compound vs. Mud	<p>Drywall joint compound is a combination of water, limestone, expanded perlite, ethylene-vinyl acetate polymer, and attapulgitite.</p> <p>Mud is a mixture of dirt and water.</p> <p>You don't finish drywall with mud. You finish it with joint compound.</p>

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## — E —

- Eat vs. Feed**                      Animals don't feed. They eat. You feed them.
- Eatable vs. Edible**                In my own personal vocabulary, I make a distinction between eatable and edible. Something that can be eaten is edible. Something that I would want to eat is eatable. Thus, in my estimation, pecan pies, coconut macaroons, and chocolate candy are both edible and eatable. Yummy! Oysters, escargot, and sushi are edible but not eatable. Yuk!
- Edible vs. Eatable**                In my own personal vocabulary, I make a distinction between eatable and edible. Something that can be eaten is edible. Something that I would want to eat is eatable. Thus, in my estimation, pecan pies, coconut macaroons, and chocolate candy are both edible and eatable. Yummy! Oysters, escargot, and sushi are edible but not eatable. Yuk!
- Email vs. Message**                You don't send an email. You send a message. It's an email message. Email is the method by which it's sent.
- End Effect**                            The End Effect was formulated by me and my friend Roger Thompson, while we were in college. It probably happened sometime during 1970, or thereabouts, and it most likely happened on a slow day. The formulation of the End Effect was intended entirely to be humorous. I'm not aware that it has any other usefulness.
- The End Effect is the response of a man who views a woman. The End Effect is divided into various categories. The Front End Effect is the response of a man who views the front side of a woman. The Rear End Effect is the response of a man who views the back side of a woman. Other categories exist. The Dynamic End Effect is the response of a man who views a woman in motion while the Static End Effect is the response of a man who views a woman at rest. Further, there is the Horizontal End Effect, the Vertical End Effect, the Clothed End Effect, and the Naked End Effect. Categories can be combined. Combinations of categories will result in different End Effects. Thus, the Clothed Static Horizontal Rear End Effect might be considerably different from the Naked Dynamic Vertical Front End Effect, and so forth.
- Engine vs. Locomotive**                A locomotive is a wheeled vehicle that pulls a train. A diesel locomotive has a diesel engine inside of it. A steam locomotive is largely a steam engine with wheels, a drive train (no pun intended but isn't it a strange language?) and a cab. It isn't proper to refer to a diesel locomotive as the engine because it only contains the engine. It might be proper to refer to a steam locomotive as the engine because the entire vehicle is, indeed, mostly an engine.
- Engine vs. Motor**                    An engine runs on combustion. A motor runs on electricity.

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- Epicenter vs. Center**     The center of a thing is the location within the thing that, as nearly as possible, is the same distance from all of the thing's edges. An epicenter is the location, underground, of the source of an earthquake or the location, on the surface of the ground, directly above the source of the earthquake. I've encountered both usages. Whatever the case, it's foolish for some nitwit masquerading as a reporter to speak of, for example, the epicenter of a riot. There isn't any such thing as the epicenter of a riot. If the nitwit AKA reporter intends to refer to the source of the riot then he ought to use the word *source*. If he intends to refer to the cause of the riot then he ought to use the word *cause*. If he intends to refer to the center of the riot, then he ought to use the word *center*. The word *epicenter* applies to earthquakes. *Epicenter* and *center* are not synonyms.
- Extension Cord vs.  
Power Cord**     A power cord connects between a wall outlet and a piece of equipment. An extension cord connects between a wall outlet and a power cord or another extension cord.

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## — F —

- Feed vs. Eat                      Animals don't feed. They eat. You feed them.
- Feral Animal vs.  
Wild Animal                      A feral animal is an animal that is living as if it was a wild animal, that is, without the care, protection, or supervision of humans, but that is, in fact, a member of a species that is domesticated. A wild animal, whether or not it is living in captivity, is an animal that is a member of a species that isn't domesticated. Even if the wild animal was raised in captivity, it is still a wild animal.
- Fly vs. Ride                      People don't fly. Airplanes fly. People ride in airplanes. When somebody makes some such statement as, "I just flew in from the coast!", the statement is both silly and false. He didn't fly. He rode in an airplane. The airplane flew.

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## — G —

- Gay vs. Homosexual** Homosexuals already had several monikers. They didn't need another one. Furthermore, there wasn't a good synonym for *gay*. There were a few words (lively, vivacious, blithe, convivial, festive) that had variously similar meanings but none that gave the same sense as the original meaning of *gay*. Thus, the homosexual's usurpation of the word has left us without a good way to describe our mood when we have a feeling of cheerful and lighthearted excitement or merriment. *Gay* was the only word that precisely described that mood. Homosexuals, as a group, have needlessly ruined an otherwise perfectly useful word. I'm taking it back. At least in my writing, they're not gay. They're homosexual.
- Genocide** Genocide is a usage that has been widely corrupted. Genocide, properly speaking, is the complete extermination of a group of people or of a culture. In fact, genocide almost never happens. That's true because there are almost always some members of the group or culture who survive. What the various activists call genocide is usually only attempted genocide. Just as a man cannot be charged with murder if the victim survives, similarly, a man, a regime, a government, or whatever, cannot be charged with genocide if some part of the victimized group or culture survives. In such a case, the proper charge isn't genocide, but attempted genocide.
- Girl** A girl is a young female human being. A young female canine isn't a girl. It's a bitch. The word *girl* designates a young female human being, not a young female dog, a young female goat, a young female bird, or whatever. Also, an adult female human being isn't a girl. She's a woman. She can also be a bitch. Now that's **really** confusing.
- Giving In vs. Putting Out** Why do they mean the same thing?
- Government vs. Anarchy vs. Chaos** Anarchy is order achieved without coercion. Chaos is lack of order. Government is order achieved coercively.
- Grout vs. Mud** Grout is a mixture of water, sand, and cement, either epoxy or urethane. Mud is a mixture of dirt and water. You don't install tiles with mud. You install them with grout.

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## — H —

Hard vs. Difficult	Hard is a surface or object that is rigid, unyielding, firm, that sort of thing. Difficult is an activity or project that requires considerable effort or determination.
Hatched vs. Born	Birds aren't born. They hatch.
Healthful vs. Healthy	Food is healthful. A person is healthy. There isn't any such thing as a healthy diet. It's a healthful diet.
Healthy vs. Healthful	Food is healthful. A person is healthy. There isn't any such thing as a healthy diet. It's a healthful diet.
Home vs. House	A house is a structure. A home is where somebody lives. Real estate people don't sell homes. They sell houses. The people who live in the houses make homes of them.
Homosexual vs. Gay	Homosexuals already had several monikers. They didn't need another one. Furthermore, there wasn't a good synonym for <i>gay</i> . There were a few words (lively, vivacious, blithe, convivial, festive) that had variously similar meanings but none that gave the same sense as the original meaning of <i>gay</i> . Thus, the homosexual's usurpation of the word has left us without a good way to describe our mood when we have a feeling of cheerful and lighthearted excitement or merriment. <i>Gay</i> was the only word that precisely described that mood. Homosexuals, as a group, have needlessly ruined an otherwise perfectly useful word. I'm taking it back. At least in my writing, they're not gay. They're homosexual.
House vs. Home	A house is a structure. A home is where somebody lives. Real estate people don't sell homes. They sell houses. The people who live in the houses make homes of them.

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## — I —

If, some uses	Some words, in some usages, ought to always be used with a particular other accompanying word. <i>If</i> is an example of such a word. In some usages, <i>if</i> should always be accompanied by <i>then</i> . Don't say, "If you wear a coat, you'll stay warm!". Say, "If you wear a coat, then you'll stay warm."
Inarguable vs. Arguable	Arguable means that a thing is open to debate. Inarguable means that it is settled beyond question.
Income vs. Outcome	Why aren't they opposites?
Information vs. Intelligence	Intelligence is an intellectual or mental ability to think or to reason. Information is data, facts, or figures. The Central Intelligence Agency (for example) doesn't collect intelligence. It collects information.
Intelligence vs. Information	Intelligence is an intellectual or mental ability to think or to reason. Information is data, facts, or figures. The Central Intelligence Agency (for example) doesn't collect intelligence. It collects information.
Invent vs. Discover	A thing that already exists can be discovered. A thing that doesn't yet exist might be invented. If a thing that already exists is merely discovered, then that isn't an invention. It should not be patentable. If an explorer discovers a river, then he didn't invent it. He only discovered it. Patenting the river is a stupid idea.

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## — J —

- Jugger** I didn't invent this word, although I wish that I had. I certainly appreciate the observations of the unknown man who did invent it. A jugger is a woman running for exercise.
- Jurisdiction vs. Despotism**
- despotism**  
**1 a :** rule by a despot **b :** despotic exercise of power  
**2 a :** a system of government in which the ruler has unlimited power : ABSOLUTISM **b :** a despotic state  
—*Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary* (Digital Edition)
- jurisdiction**  
**1 :** the power, right, or authority to interpret and apply the law  
**2 a :** the authority of a sovereign power to govern or legislate **b :** the power or right to exercise authority : CONTROL  
**3 :** the limits or territory within which authority may be exercised  
synonyms see POWER  
—*Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary* (Digital Edition)
- The two words appear, at first glance, to be almost synonymous. The essence of both definitions is the exercise of power. Current usage fails to properly distinguish between the meanings of the two words. The distinction is legitimacy. That is, despotism involves the illegitimate exercise of power. Jurisdiction involves the legitimate exercise of power. Thus, although both words denote an exercise of power, they are mutually exclusive regarding the legitimacy of that exercise.

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Milam's Dictionary of  
Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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— K —

Knockee

A knockee is a pregnant woman. Most of the women who've heard that one don't like it but none of them have suggested a better designation so they're stuck with it until they do.

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# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — L —

- Lamp vs. Light      A lamp produces light. It isn't a light. It produces light. It's a lamp.
- Last vs. Most Recent      People almost always use the word *last* when *most recent* was what they really intended. *The last time that I went outside, the sun was shining.* Almost certainly, the person will go outside again, unless he dies first. Thus, the most recent time that he went outside wasn't the last time. It was only the most recent time.
- Law vs. Legislation      The term *law* properly addresses things that are inherent or fundamental. It addresses things that men observe or discover, such as the law of gravity or the law of supply and demand. Laws operate of their own accord, whether or not any man is even aware of them. They don't require enforcement by men. Any violation of a law will result in a consequence, without the intervention of men. The term *legislation* properly addresses the proclamations and declarations of men, usually intended to compel or to prohibit some specified behavior. Legislation doesn't operate of its own accord. The violation of legislation might not cause any consequence at all unless such violation is observed by men and such consequence is enforced by men.
- Legalize vs. Decriminalize      To legalize some activity or behavior is to declare by statute that the activity or behavior is permitted. Such legalization is usually a euphemism for control and regulation. To decriminalize some activity or behavior is to repeal any and all statutes or regulations that address the activity or behavior. That has the effect of moving the activity or behavior completely out of the purview of government.
- Legislation vs. Law      The term *law* properly addresses things that are inherent or fundamental. It addresses things that men observe or discover, such as the law of gravity or the law of supply and demand. Laws operate of their own accord, whether or not any man is even aware of them. They don't require enforcement by men. Any violation of a law will result in a consequence, without the intervention of men. The term *legislation* properly addresses the proclamations and declarations of men, usually intended to compel or to prohibit some specified behavior. Legislation doesn't operate of its own accord. The violation of legislation might not cause any consequence at all unless such violation is observed by men and such consequence is enforced by men.
- Light vs. Lamp      A lamp produces light. It isn't a light. It produces light. It's a lamp.

## Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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- Locomotive vs. Engine      A locomotive is a wheeled vehicle that pulls a train. A diesel locomotive has a diesel engine inside of it. A steam locomotive is largely a steam engine with wheels, a drive train (no pun intended but isn't it a strange language?) and a cab. It isn't proper to refer to a diesel locomotive as the engine because it only contains the engine. It might be proper to refer to a steam locomotive as the engine because the entire vehicle is, indeed, mostly an engine.
- Look vs. Appearance      A thing doesn't have a look. You look at the thing. The thing has an appearance.

# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — M —

May vs. Can	<p><i>Can</i> designates ability. <i>May</i> designates permission.</p> <p>“Mother, <u>may</u> I go play with Sally?”</p> <p>“Yes, Johnny, but only if you <u>can</u> avoid getting her pregnant.”</p>
May vs. Might	<p><i>May</i> designates permission. <i>Might</i> designates likelihood or probability.</p> <p>“Mother, <u>may</u> I go play with Sally?”</p> <p>“Yes Johnny, but be careful. She <u>might</u> get pregnant.”</p>
Message vs. Email	<p>You don't send an email. You send a message. It's an email message. Email is the method by which it's sent.</p>
Might vs. May	<p><i>May</i> designates permission. <i>Might</i> designates likelihood or probability.</p> <p>“Mother, <u>may</u> I go play with Sally?”</p> <p>“Yes Johnny, but be careful. She <u>might</u> get pregnant.”</p>
Military Gibberish	<p>You can run fast. You can even walk fast. How do you stand fast? You can sit down. You can lay down. How do you stand down? In that regard, how do you lay down fire? You don't lay down the gun, you fire it. The bullets don't lay down. They whiz across the battle field. Also, if it's a pasture, then why is it still a battle field instead of a battle pasture? Speaking of guns, why do they say “lock and load”? Why don't they say “load and cock”. You don't lock anything before you load a gun. You load it and then you cock it. Such gibberish jargon brings to mind the enigmatic term <i>military intelligence</i>.</p>
Modern Classical Music	<p>There isn't any such thing as <i>modern classical music</i>. Classical Music is music from the late 18th and early 19th centuries and includes such forms as chamber music, opera, and symphony. Personally, I would also include masses and oratorios in the category. Most of what I've heard that's described as modern classical music is either strident, tedious, or discordant and is largely a waste of notes. The only modern music that I've heard that actually sounds like Classical Music is music that has been written for movie sound tracks. The music to which people usually refer as <i>modern classical music</i> needs a new name.</p>
Money	<p>In order to serve well as money, a thing must be durable, portable, divisible without loss of value, available in limited quantity, generally accepted as money, and have intrinsic value as money. The greater the extent to which a thing possesses those qualities, the better it will serve as money. See my essay <a href="#">Money</a>.</p>
Monograph vs. Monologue	<p>A monograph is written. A monologue is spoken.</p>
Monologue vs. Monograph	<p>A monograph is written. A monologue is spoken.</p>

## Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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Mortar vs. Mud	Mortar is made from sand, water, and cement or lime. Mud is made from dirt and water. You don't lay blocks with mud. You lay blocks with mortar.
Most Recent vs. Last	People almost always use the word <i>last</i> when <i>most recent</i> was what they really intended. <i>The last time that I went outside, the sun was shining.</i> Almost certainly, the person will go outside again, unless he dies first. Thus, the most recent time that he went outside wasn't the last time. It was only the most recent time.
Mother Nature	There isn't any such thing as Mother Nature. It's Father Nature and Mother Earth. Nature is the active principle. Earth is the receptive principle.
Motor vs. Engine	An engine runs on combustion. A motor runs on electricity.
Mud vs. Drywall Joint Compound	Drywall joint compound is a combination of water, limestone, expanded perlite, ethylene-vinyl acetate polymer, and attapulgite. Mud is a mixture of dirt and water. You don't finish drywall with mud. You finish it with joint compound.
Mud vs. Grout	Grout is a mixture of water, sand, and cement, either epoxy or urethane. Mud is a mixture of dirt and water. You don't install tiles with mud. You install them with grout.
Mud vs. Mortar	Mortar is made from sand, water, and cement or lime. Mud is made from dirt and water. You don't lay blocks with mud. You lay blocks with mortar.

# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — N —

NEWS	Not Even Worth Showing Not Even Worth Seeing
Nononyms	Nononyms are words that are simultaneously homonyms and antonyms. See <a href="#">The Ravings of a Mad Man</a> .
Nuclear Energy vs. Atomic Energy	The use of the term <i>atomic energy</i> instead of the term <i>nuclear energy</i> is a silly mistake. It isn't <b>atomic</b> energy. Atomic energy comes from rearranging atoms, like when carbon atoms combine with oxygen atoms to form carbon dioxide and release heat. A campfire is atomic energy. It's <b>nuclear</b> energy. Nuclear energy comes from rearranging nuclei, like when the nucleus of a uranium atom splits into two or more smaller nuclei, releasing energy.  Also, regardless of the ignorant babbling of Herr Bush to the contrary, it isn't nu-cu-lar energy. It's nu-cle-ar energy.

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# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — O —

Odds and Ends	If you get rid of all but one of your odds and ends, then what do you call the remaining one?
Odor vs. Smell	Food doesn't have a smell. Food has an odor. You don't smell the food. You smell the odor.
One vs. Zero, When Counting	<p>The first item or object that you encounter will be item or object number one. Zero isn't the designation of the first such item or object. Zero is the designation of not having any such items or objects. My perception is that programmers are the only people who start counting at zero instead of at one. To them, the first item is always number zero. Maybe they suffer irreversible brain damage while they're being trained to be programmers.</p> <p>Afterword: I recently noticed on my VCR that, when the counter is running from negative numbers to positive numbers, or vice versa, it shows both plus and minus zero. That's pretty stupid. the counter code must have been programmed by a programmer.</p>
Oral vs. Verbal	<p>Oral means spoken. Verbal means expressed in words.</p> <p>A verbal communication can be either written or spoken. A spoken communication is both oral and verbal. A written communication is both written and verbal.</p>
Outcome vs. Income	Why aren't they opposites?

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# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — P —

PDF	PDF stands for Portable Document Format. Thus, there isn't any such thing as a PDF format. It's either PDF or PD format. However, it's correct and acceptable to say PDF file.
Pedophilia vs. Adolescent vs. Child	An adolescent is a minor who has achieved puberty. A child is a minor who hasn't yet achieved puberty. Pedophilia doesn't have anything to do with adolescents, but with children. A man who has a sexual attraction to adolescents isn't a pedophile. A man who has a sexual attraction to children is a pedophile. A 15-year-old female isn't a child. She's an adolescent.
Perfect Legs	Feet at one end, pussy at the other.
Pet Parent	I'm disgusted with those pet supply commercials in which some woman refers to herself as a pet parent. Such corruption of the meanings of words is an affront to the language. She isn't a pet parent unless the mangy mongrel actually came out of her birth canal. Of course, she isn't a pet owner, either. See my short article <a href="#">Right Treatment</a> . It's available on page 1 of the May 2011 issue of the <i>Frontiersman</i> .
Photograph vs. Capture	If you take a picture of a thing, then you haven't captured the thing. You've photographed the thing. You haven't captured the thing unless you have it in a box or a cage.
PIN	PIN stands for personal identification number. There isn't any such thing as a PIN Number. The N already stands for number. Thus, it's either a PI Number or a PIN. It isn't a PIN Number.
Poems and Poets	The things that people write nowadays, and call poems, are not poems. The people who write them are not poets. I don't have a good name for them, either the people or the things. For lack of better terms, I refer to the things as "weird prose that you read in a strained tone of voice" and to the people as phonies. A piece of writing isn't a poem unless it has rhyme and rhythm. A person who writes such a thing, even a Poet Laureate, isn't a poet unless the thing that he writes is a poem.
Polish vs. Shine	A star shines. A light bulb shines. You don't shine your shoes. You polish them. When you polish them, they don't shine. They become reflective.
Political Correctness	Courtesy isn't something that is demanded. Courtesy is something that is offered. When courtesy is demanded, then the thing that is received isn't courtesy. The thing that is received is compliance.  Respect isn't something that is demanded. Respect is something that is earned. When respect is demanded, then the thing that is received isn't respect. The thing that is received is repressed resentment.
Poppa's Nerve	My father told me about this nerve. It connects between a person's mouth and his ears, and keeps his ears from working when his mouth is open.

## Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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Porch vs. Deck	A deck is a floor on a boat or a ship. A floor attached to the back of a house isn't a deck. It's a porch.
Power Cord vs. Extension Cord	A power cord connects between a wall outlet and a piece of equipment. An extension cord connects between a wall outlet and a power cord or another extension cord.
Prejudice vs. Discrimination	<p>Discrimination is the process of distinguishing between things that are different from one another. It can be irrelevant. An example is the ability to tell the difference in flavor, blindfolded, between Coke and Pepsi. It can be useful. An example is the ability to tell the difference between poisonous snakes and the other kind. In general, discrimination is morally neutral.</p> <p>Prejudice is a difference in behavior and possibly a difference in attitude (I'm not sure about that) according to the differences between things that are different from one another. Prejudice can be bad, morally neutral, or good. It's bad when it results in harm. Racial prejudice is an example. It's morally neutral when the results are irrelevant. Always choosing vanilla ice cream, instead of chocolate ice cream, is an example. It's good when the results are beneficial. Killing poisonous snakes and preserving the other kind is an example.</p>
Privilege vs. Right	<p>You must have permission to exercise a privilege. You don't need permission to exercise a right.</p> <p>See my essay <a href="#">The Ravings of a Mad Man</a>.</p>
PTND	post-traumatic nagging disorder
Public	Understanding of the word <i>public</i> has been largely corrupted by careless usage. Properly speaking, when something is public then the public thing is something that is unowned. The term <i>public property</i> is therefore a contradiction in terms. Property is something that is owned. Properly speaking, property cannot be public, by definition. Likewise, something that is public cannot be property, by definition. I doubt if there is, anywhere in the entire country, anything that is actually public — except maybe for the language itself.
Putting Out vs. Giving In	Why do they mean the same thing?

Milam's Dictionary of  
Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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— Q —

Qualified vs. Certified

Qualification has to do with knowledge or ability. A person is qualified to do a thing if he has the knowledge or the ability to do it. A qualified person might or might not be certified. Certification has to do with permission or authorization. A person is certified to do a thing if he has obtained the permission or the authorization to do it from some agency or institution. A certified person might or might not be qualified..

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# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — R —

- Race vs. Species      A species is a group of organism the members of which are capable of breeding with one another, within the group, to produce viable and fertile offspring, and incapable of doing so with individuals outside of the group. A race is a group within a species the members of which will breed true, within the race, for some particular distinguishing racial characteristic, or set of distinguishing racial characteristics, but which can nevertheless successfully breed with other individuals who are outside of the racial group but within the species group. Thus, there are several human races but only one human species. To refer to the human species as the human race is incorrect. Widespread references, in fiction, to alien races are inaccurate. Those aren't alien races. They are alien species. However, there might be alien races within an alien species. The idea of viable offspring from unions of humans and vulcans, for example, is obviously stupid.
- RCH      Red Cunt Hair, an extremely precise unit of measure, used in advanced chemistry and physics experiments, mostly by university grad students.  
Usage Example: We're almost there! Just tweak it one more RCH and we'll have it!
- Receiver vs. Transmitter      A transmitter is powerful. A receiver isn't powerful. A receiver is sensitive.
- Record vs. Capture      If you make an audio recording or a video recording of a thing, then you haven't captured the thing. You've made a recording of the thing. You haven't captured the thing unless you have it in a box or a cage.
- Ride vs. Fly      People don't fly. Airplanes fly. People ride in airplanes. When somebody makes some such statement as, "I just flew in from the coast!", the statement is both silly and false. He didn't fly. He rode in an airplane. The airplane flew.
- Right vs. Ability      An ability is something that you're capable of doing. A right is an ability the exercise of which will be generally or customarily approved or at least tolerated.  
See my essay [The Ravings of a Mad Man](#).
- Right vs. Privilege      You must have permission to exercise a privilege. You don't need permission to exercise a right.  
See my essay [The Ravings of a Mad Man](#).
- Rubens, Peter Paul      The man's last name was Rubens, not Ruben. His work is properly described as Rubensesque, not Rubenesque.

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# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — S —

**Sago** A sago is a Sweetie of the Appropriate Gender and Orientation. That is, a heterosexual woman can be a sago to a heterosexual man, a heterosexual man can be a sago to a heterosexual woman, a homosexual man can be a sago to another homosexual man, and a homosexual woman can be a sago to another homosexual woman. The word can really simplify conversations between folks with different sexual preferences.

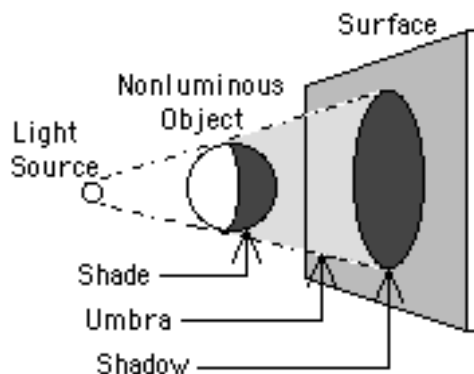
**SEP** Somebody Else's Problem

I encountered this acronym while I was working as a production engineer for the control panel assembly area at the General Electric Company, in San Jose, California. The acronym is most properly used as a declaration of noninvolvement, nonparticipation, or lack of responsibility. Here's an example.

"I don't have to fix the errors in that panel drawing! That's SEP!"

**Shade, Umbra, and  
Shadow**

The shade is the unlighted portion of an object from which light is blocked by the object itself. The shadow is the unlighted portion of an object from which light is blocked by a different object. The umbra is the region between the shadow and the shade. Depending upon the sizes and the arrangement of the relevant objects and the light source, there might not be a shadow but only a shade and an umbra. Whatever the case, you cannot stand in the shade of the old apple tree. You can stand in the umbra of the old apple tree, with the shade above you and the shadow below you.

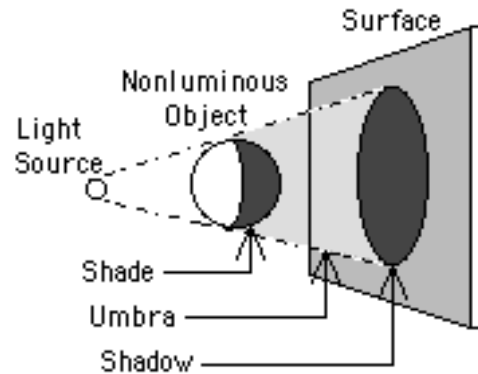


## Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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Shadow, Shade, and Umbra

The shade is the unlighted portion of an object from which light is blocked by the object itself. The shadow is the unlighted portion of an object from which light is blocked by a different object. The umbra is the region between the shadow and the shade. Depending upon the sizes and the arrangement of the relevant objects and the light source, there might not be a shadow but only a shade and an umbra. Whatever the case, you cannot stand in the shade of the old apple tree. You can stand in the umbra of the old apple tree, with the shade above you and the shadow below you.



Shine vs. Polish

A star shines. A light bulb shines. You don't shine your shoes. You polish them. When you polish them, they don't shine. They become reflective.

Shitware

Shitware is either hardware or software that doesn't work correctly.

Skies vs. Sky

Why do the weather wackos always talk about "clear skies", "cloudy skies", and so forth? There's only one sky. For that matter, why is there even a plural form of the word?

Skill vs. Talent

A talent is inherent. A skill is acquired.

Sky vs. Skies

Why do the weather wackos always talk about "clear skies", "cloudy skies", and so forth? There's only one sky. For that matter, why is there even a plural form of the word?

Slick vs. Slippery

A surface is slick. An object is slippery.

Slippery vs. Slick

A surface is slick. An object is slippery.

Smell vs. Odor

Food doesn't have a smell. Food has an odor. You don't smell the food. You smell the odor.

So, some uses

Some words, in some usages, ought to always be used with a particular other accompanying word. *So* is an example of such a word. In some usages, *so* should always be accompanied by *that*. Don't say, "I was so mad!". You were so mad that what? You were so mad that you could have spit? Don't say, "I was so tired!" You were so tired that what? You were so tired that you couldn't think? Really! I am so tired of that particular error!

OK, I was only testing you. Actually, I'm so tired of that particular error that I decided to make this little addition to my dictionary.

## Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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Society vs. Civilization	So far as I'm aware, there has never yet been a human society that was actually a civilization. They all seem to have been populated mostly by uncivilized people, lacking understanding or humility. That disqualifies those societies from being called civilizations. They're societies, but not civilizations.
Soldier vs. Warrior	A soldier follows orders. A warrior thinks for himself.
Speaks About vs. Speaks To	A person doesn't speak to a subject. He speaks to a person. He speaks about a subject.
Speaks To vs. Speaks About	A person doesn't speak to a subject. He speaks to a person. He speaks about a subject.
Species vs. Race	A species is a group of organism the members of which are capable of breeding with one another, within the group, to produce viable and fertile offspring, and incapable of doing so with individuals outside of the group. A race is a group within a species the members of which will breed true, within the race, for some particular distinguishing racial characteristic, or set of distinguishing racial characteristics, but which can nevertheless successfully breed with other individuals who are outside of the racial group but within the species group. Thus, there are several human races but only one human species. To refer to the human species as the human race is incorrect. Widespread references, in fiction, to alien races are inaccurate. Those aren't alien races. They are alien species. However, there might be alien races within an alien species. The idea of viable offspring from unions of humans and vulcans, for example, is obviously stupid.
Speed Bumps	Why do people call them speed bumps? They don't make you go fast. They make you go slow. They're slow bumps.
Speed vs. Velocity	Speed is a scalar quantity. That is, it has only magnitude. <i>The speed of the boat was 20 knots.</i> Velocity is a vector quantity. That is, it has both magnitude and direction. <i>The velocity of the boat was 20 knots, due north.</i> How do you change velocity without changing speed? You do it by following a curved path at a constant speed.
Spread	When I was young, I ate butter or margarine. One day, some people decided to sell a product for which they didn't have a name. Since it lacked a name, they decided to call it by what you do with it. However, spread isn't something that you eat on bread or potatoes. The stuff isn't spread. It's yellow stuff. Spread is how you apply it to the bread or to the potato.
Square vs. Cubic	A square is a two dimensional shape. A cube is a three dimensional shape. A box isn't square. It's cubic.
Statistical Analysis vs. Statistics	Statistics are a collection of data on some particular subject. Statistical Analysis is a branch of mathematics dealing with the collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of masses of numerical data

## Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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Statistics vs. Statistical Analysis	Statistics are a collection of data on some particular subject. Statistical Analysis is a branch of mathematics dealing with the collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of masses of numerical data
Stroke vs. Cycle in Reference to an Internal Combustion Engine	<p>Generally, a stroke is a change from one location or condition to another location or condition. An example might be the movement that your hand makes when you stroke a cat. Generally, a cycle is a recurring change from one location or condition to at least one other location or condition, and possibly to several other locations or conditions, with an eventual return to the original location or condition. An example might be the cycle of the seasons.</p> <p>In an internal combustion engine, a stroke is the movement of a piston from one end of its cylinder to the other end of its cylinder. A cycle is the movement of a piston and all of the associated moving parts, crank shaft, cam shaft, valves, other pistons, and so forth, from one configuration, through their entire range of movement, and back to the same original configuration.</p> <p>In some internal combustion engines, a piston will make two strokes while the piston and its associated parts move through one complete cycle. In other internal combustion engines, a piston will make four strokes during the complete cycle. Thus, the terminology of referring to an internal combustion engine as either a two-cycle engine or a four-cycle engine is incorrect. All such engines are one-cycle engines. The correct term for a so-called two-cycle engine is that it is a two-stroke engine. That is, the piston makes two strokes per cycle. Similarly, the correct term for a so-called four-cycle engine is that it is a four-stroke engine. In such an engine, a piston makes four strokes per cycle.</p>
Suds, singular form	There isn't any such thing as a single sud. It's called a bubble.
Sun vs. Sunshine	The sun is the star about which the Earth orbits. You don't get a suntan by standing in the sun. You get vaporized by standing in the sun. You get a suntan by standing in the sunshine, at a safe distance of about 93 million miles.
Sunshine vs. Sun	The sun is the star about which the Earth orbits. You don't get a suntan by standing in the sun. You get vaporized by standing in the sun. You get a suntan by standing in the sunshine, at a safe distance of about 93 million miles.

# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — T —

Talent vs. Skill	A talent is inherent. A skill is acquired.
Target vs. Aim At	You don't target something. <i>Target</i> is a noun. You aim at something. <i>Aim</i> is a verb. The target is the thing at which you aim.
Technobully	A technobully is someone who forces high-tech products into the marketplace without any regard for how silly or how useless they are and for no better reason than that they're more high-tech than previous versions of the same product, or of a similar product.
Technosnob	A technosnob is someone who sneers at other people for using products that are not as high-tech as his own.
Technosucker	A technosucker is someone who mindlessly welcomes any new product without regard for how silly or how useless it is and for no better reason than that it's more high-tech than previous versions of the same product, or of a similar product.. My father taught me that all progress is change but not all change is progress. Most people today have failed to learn that lesson. They're technosuckers.
That vs. This	This here, that there.
The letter O vs. the number zero	The letter O is a letter. The number zero is a number. It isn't Highway One O One. It's Highway One Zero One.
The number zero vs. the letter O	The letter O is a letter. The number zero is a number. It isn't Highway One O One. It's Highway One Zero One.
This vs. That	This here, that there.
Tolerance vs. Toleration	Toleration is putting up with somebody or something that you don't like. Tolerance is an acceptable variation in a measurement or a dimension.
Toleration vs. Tolerance	Toleration is putting up with somebody or something that you don't like. Tolerance is an acceptable variation in a measurement or a dimension.
Transmitter vs. Receiver	A transmitter is powerful. A receiver isn't powerful. A receiver is sensitive.
Troops, singular form	There isn't any such thing as a single troop. He's called a soldier.

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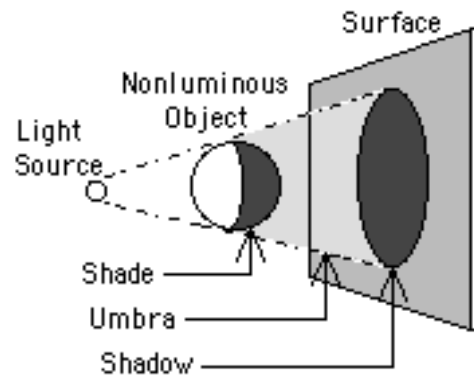
# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — U —

Umbra, Shadow, and  
Shade

The shade is the unlighted portion of an object from which light is blocked by the object itself. The shadow is the unlighted portion of an object from which light is blocked by a different object. The umbra is the region between the shadow and the shade. Depending upon the sizes and the arrangement of the relevant objects and the light source, there might not be a shadow but only a shade and an umbra. Whatever the case, you cannot stand in the shade of the old apple tree. You can stand in the umbra of the old apple tree, with the shade above you and the shadow below you.



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# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — V —

- Velocity vs. Speed      Speed is a scalar quantity. That is, it has only magnitude. *The speed of the boat was 20 knots.* Velocity is a vector quantity. That is, it has both magnitude and direction. *The velocity of the boat was 20 knots, due north.* How do you change velocity without changing speed? You do it by following a curved path at a constant speed.
- Verbal vs. Oral      Oral means spoken. Verbal means expressed in words.  
A verbal communication can be either written or spoken. A spoken communication is both oral and verbal. A written communication is both written and verbal.
- VIN      VIN stands for vehicle identification number. There isn't any such thing as a VIN Number. The N already stands for number. Thus, it's either a VI Number or a VIN. It isn't a VIN Number.
- Visit vs. Visitation      The words can be used as synonyms but I recommend against it. Distinctions are important. I recommend the following.  
A visit is an act of going to see a person or thing, a brief stay of business, friendship, ceremony, or curiosity, and so forth.  
A visitation is an act of divine favor or goodness or, more usually, of divine wrath, vengeance, or retribution.  
Thus, the arrival of an angel is a visitation. The arrival of a neighbor is a visit. I believe that the distinction is of great importance and that it should be carefully observed and preserved by the careful use of a different word for each kind of event.
- Visitation vs. Visit      The words can be used as synonyms but I recommend against it. Distinctions are important. I recommend the following.  
A visit is an act of going to see a person or thing, a brief stay of business, friendship, ceremony, or curiosity, and so forth.  
A visitation is an act of divine favor or goodness or, more usually, of divine wrath, vengeance, or retribution.  
Thus, the arrival of an angel is a visitation. The arrival of a neighbor is a visit. I believe that the distinction is of great importance and that it should be carefully observed and preserved by the careful use of a different word for each kind of event.

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# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — W —

Warrior vs. Soldier	A soldier follows orders. A warrior thinks for himself.
Was vs. Were	<i>Was</i> goes with a singular word. <i>Were</i> goes with a plural word. You don't say "I wish I were rich." You say either "I wish I was rich" or "I wish we were rich".
Were vs. Was	<i>Was</i> goes with a singular word. <i>Were</i> goes with a plural word. You don't say "I wish I were rich." You say either "I wish I was rich" or "I wish we were rich".
Wild Animal vs. Feral Animal	A feral animal is an animal that is living as if it was a wild animal, that is, without the care, protection, or supervision of humans, but that is, in fact, a member of a species that is domesticated. A wild animal, whether or not it is living in captivity, is an animal that is a member of a species that isn't domesticated. Even if the wild animal was raised in captivity, it is still a wild animal.
Will vs. Can	<i>Can</i> designates ability. <i>Will</i> designates cooperation or intention. "Johnny, <u>will</u> you come over for a visit?" "Yes, Sally, I <u>will</u> come over for a visit, but only if you <u>can</u> avoid becoming pregnant."
Writewith ,Writeon, Writeonwith	A <i>writewith</i> is anything that you can write with. A <i>writeon</i> is anything that you can write on. A <i>writeonwith</i> is one of each. Now you'll never again have to have that tedious conversation. Speaker 1: Will you loan me a pencil? Speaker 2: All I have is a pen. Speaker 1: That's alright. Just something to write with. The concept can be extended to almost anything. A <i>cutwith</i> is anything that you can cut with, and so forth.

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## Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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### — X —

X times less than....

I encounter this ignorant misuse of the language from time to time. During one documentary, the narrator stated that the object under discussion was ten times smaller than our Sun. They claimed to be scientists and still made such a stupid blunder. Another example that comes to mind is a toilet paper commercial during which the claim is made that you can use four times less if you use their brand.

There isn't any such thing as (for example) "[something] is ten times smaller than [something else]." In such a description of a mathematical relationship, *times* means *multiplied by* or *increased by a factor of*. *Times 10* inherently means *multiplied by 10* or *larger by a factor of 10*. A thing can be ten times bigger than something else but not ten times less than something else. The proper statement for something being smaller than the thing to which it is being compared would be "[something] is one-tenth as large as [something else]."

Sometimes, I wonder if it's even possible to think and talk, both at the same time.

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# Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends

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## — Z —

Zero vs. One, When  
Counting

The first item or object that you encounter will be item or object number one. Zero isn't the designation of the first such item or object. Zero is the designation of not having any such items or objects. My perception is that programmers are the only people who start counting at zero instead of at one. To them, the first item is always number zero. Maybe they suffer irreversible brain damage while they're being trained to be programmers.

Afterword: I recently noticed on my VCR that, when the counter is running from negative numbers to positive numbers, or vice versa, it shows both plus and minus zero. That's pretty stupid.

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