

# Milam's Dictionary of Nononyms

by

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This dictionary was first created on Wednesday, January 27, 2016 and was most recently revised on Friday, November 3, 2023.

This document is approximately 1,254 words long.

My essays are available on *Pharos*.

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*caveat lector*

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# Milam's Dictionary of Nononyms

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## Introduction

Long ago, in my essay *The Ravings of a Mad Man*, I recognized and documented a peculiar category of words in the English language.

I'm not aware of any previous formal discussion of this peculiar characteristic of our language. For now, I'll assume that I'm the first one to have documented it. Therefore, by right of discovery, I'm establishing a new category of words in the English language. Henceforth, words that are simultaneously homonyms and antonyms shall be called nononyms, pronounced "no-no nems."

—from *The Ravings of a Mad Man*, pages 7 - 8

That is, nononyms are different words that are spelled the same and pronounced the same and have meanings that are not just different, but opposite — homonyms and antonyms, both at the same time. Ghastly!

I first completed the essay on Tuesday, March 28, 1989. In the essay, I suggested that readers could send me some examples of nononyms, and I'd start a list. It's been more than 30 years and nobody has ever sent me any examples. Maybe nobody cares. Maybe nobody's even read the essay. I don't know. You can lead a horse to water....

I consider the existence and use of nononyms to be a bad thing. The English Language is already sufficiently difficult to use without needlessly making it worse. See the *Introduction to Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends*, in *The Sovereign's Library*. Furthermore, some nononyms aren't just obstructive of understanding, they're also in very poor taste. *Honey pot* is a good example. I refuse to even use the term in the second sense shown in this dictionary.

It's been a long time since 1989, but I've been busy. So, it wasn't until Wednesday, January 27, 2016, that I finally decided to start my list of nononyms. It started out as a very short list, with only two nononyms in the first version. Those two nononyms are *roam* and *tribute*. It wasn't until Monday, June 4, 2018 that I finally got around to adding two more terms to the list. They were *honey pot* and *oversight*. On Wednesday, December 19, 2018, I added *demean*. It's now Saturday, July 18, 2020, and I just added *escalator*. That one was actually mentioned in the original essay. Why did it take so long for me to add it here? I don't know.

I expect that the list will get longer if I find the time to add more terms, when I encounter them, or if other people send me some examples (hint hint wink wink nudge nudge). I think that maybe there isn't any point, after this, in modifying this Introduction every time that I add a new term. I'll just show the date of addition at each term. I've added those dates at the existing terms. and at the new one for this edition, jurisdiction. Anyway, here's the list, so far.

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demean

1: to conduct or behave (oneself) usually in a proper manner

Wednesday, December 19, 2018

2: to lower in character, status, or reputation

—*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*  
Eleventh Edition, 2011

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escalator

Saturday, July 18,  
2020

two different machines that do two opposite things, both with the same name

1: a machine that moves people to a higher level

2: a different machine that moves people to a lower level

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- honey pot • A container with honey in it.  
Monday, June 4, 2018 • A container with shit in it.

—Source Unknown

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jurisdiction                    1: legitimate power and control  
Friday, November 3,        2: illegitimate power and control  
2023                              This is the best known example of a failed usage preventing people  
   from distinguishing between things that are absolutely different  
   from one another. People universally fail to distinguish between  
   the two kinds of jurisdiction because the two different words are  
   nononyms.

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oversight                    **1 a** : watchful and responsible care   **b** : regulatory supervision  
Monday, June 4, 2018   <congressional *oversight*>  
                                 **2** : an inadvertent omission or error  
   —*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*  
   Eleventh Edition, 2011

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sanction

Sunday, July 4, 2021

4 c: explicit or official approval, permission, or ratification: AP-  
PROBATION

5: an economic or military coercive measure adopted usually by  
several nations in concert for forcing a nation violating interna-  
tional law to desist or yield to adjudication

—*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*  
Eleventh Edition, 2011

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tribute

Wednesday, January  
27, 2016

**1 b** (1) : an excessive tax, rental, or tariff imposed by a government, sovereign, lord, or landlord (2) : an exorbitant charge levied by a person or group having the power of coercion

**2 a** : something given or contributed voluntarily as due or deserved; especially : a gift or service showing respect, gratitude, or affection

—*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*  
Eleventh Edition, 2011

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1. 2011

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