

## **WORDS THAT AMUSE; WORDS THAT SWING**

- 1. abaft – to the rear of. Deployable, perhaps, among other uses, with expressions of lasciviousness and goatishness; e.g., “The view abaft as the waitress withdrew from the table was exhilarating.” Or simple declarations of large-bottomness: “I’ve put on a few pounds abaft.”**
- 2. ablution – cleansing of the body in a ritualistic manner. “Having performed his morning ablutions, he set out into the day with vigor.”**
- 3. atwitter – excited or nervous. “In his salad days he set all the young girls atwitter, but now the old goat can’t get a date to save his life.”**
- 4. adiposity – ones fat. “As Herr Director slowly raised his gargantuan adiposity from the chair in anger, the floor began to tremble and fear overtook all but the stoutest of hearts.”**
- 5. agog – extremely excited with anticipation. “The students were agog at the prospect of the president visiting their class.”**
- 6. akimbo – with hand on hip and elbow bent outward. Can be used to refer to anything that is bent.**
- 7. alfresco – in the open air. “They felt very French, cavorting alfresco and in the buff.”**
- 8. anaphrodisiac – something that dampens sexual ardor. “The elderly women at the topless beach seldom failed to serve as an anaphrodisiac.”**
- 9. antediluvian – literally: before the flood, i.e., in Biblical times or quite ancient. “The antediluvian doctrine of states’ rights sounded**

- out of place being invoked on the Senate floor in the post-civil rights era.”
10. **aphorize** – give birth to short, pithy sayings. “In their attempts to aphorize, the politicians could come up only with the same trite and tedious sound bites.”
  11. **aplomb** – poise, gracefulness in a public or challenging setting. “She brought off the speech not just with confidence, but with aplomb.”
  12. **apothegm** – a synonym for aphorism also meaning a short, pithy saying.
  13. **assignation** – an appointed and often stealthy rendezvous, usually for sexual purposes. “The customary Thursday assignation with his mistress had to be cancelled due to matters of state.”
  14. **athwart** – standing in opposition to. Conservative magazine *National Review*, once upon a time a wordsmith’s sanctuary, famously stated its mission to be “standing athwart history crying ‘stop.’”
  15. **avuncular** – like a kindly, benevolent uncle. “Walter Cronkite’s avuncular delivery made him ‘the most trusted man in America.’”
  16. **bacchanal** – drunken revelry, usually involving a large number of participants. Comes from the Roman god of wine, Bacchus.
  17. **bafflegab** – confusing, unintelligible jargon; gobbledygook.
  18. **ballast** – heavy weight carried on a ship to provide stability. Often, those who carry a lot of weight towards their bottom are referred to as carrying plenty of ballast.
  19. **ballyhoo** – to promote extravagantly, to hype. The 1920s were famously the era of ballyhoo, when the emerging field of public relations and journalism aimed at the masses produced larger than life celebrities such as Lindbergh, Ruth, Dempsey.

20. **balmy** – a little bit crazy.
21. **barratry** – the offense of stirring up law suits. “Ambulance chasers must be careful that they don’t cross the line over into barratry.”
22. **beau monde** – the fashionable world; high society.
23. **Beelzebub** – the devil.
24. **beguile** – to enchant, sometimes by deception. To be beguiled is to experience attraction despite the objections of reason.
25. **besotted** – made stupid with infatuation.
26. **bete noire** -- something that you are particularly averse to.
27. **bordello** – melodious word for house of prostitution. Brothel and cathouse have also been somewhat misplaced synonyms in the U.S.
28. **brickbat** – a scathing criticism. Brickbats generally are “hurled” at their victims, or, more gently, “tossed.”
29. **brimful** – full to the brim. “Brimful of bullshit” is often a felicitous and accurate way of describing the American public discourse.
30. **bucolic** – an adjective describing an idyllic rural way of life. Often used ironically today to suggest far less than idyllic.
31. **bugbear** – a source of fear or great annoyance, often to the point of near-obsession. “The professor’s special bugbear was student non-responsiveness in class.”
32. **buggery** – anal intercourse. Lost in the U.S., far less so in the U.K., is the “I’m bugged if.....” series of mot jus. E.g.: “I’m bugged if I can remember the last time we went on a picnic.”
33. **calumny** – false and malicious statement.

34. **canoodle** – caress, fondle or pet amorously.
35. **caprice** – sudden and whimsical change of mind. Traditionally combined with the adjective “mere.”
36. **celerity** – speed.
37. **chippy** – competing roughly and aggressively. Also a prostitute.
38. **choleric** – of an ill humor, quick to anger.
39. **chortle** – combination of chuckle and snort coined by Lewis Carroll.
40. **clodpoll** – a stupid person.
41. **clubbable** – sociable, integrating easily into established social networks. Often used ironically to suggest distasteful glad-handing. Unclubbable is a reasonably delicate way of describing a complete social maladept.
42. **cock-up** – a foul-up, clusterfuck.
43. **colloquy** – dialogue, usually between two people and of an academic nature, though it doesn't have to be.
44. **coltish** – young and frisky. Galloping about like a colt.
45. **concupiscence** – lust. Useful when wishing to cast sexual desire in a sinfulness frame, going for that medieval effect.
46. **confabulate** – to converse in an informal manner. “The mid-afternoon confabulation at the water cooler was a staple of their employment.”
47. **conglutinate** – glued together; adhering.
48. **constabulary** – the police. “Not wishing an encounter with the constabulary that evening, he kept his drinking to a minimum.”

- 49. contrapuntal – composed of more than one melody played together. Would seem to have a wide metaphoric range, for enthusiasts of multiculturalism and such.**
- 50. contumely – expression of insults and contempt. Four syllables are pronounced.**
- 51. corpulent – fat. For those wishing to ease the sting of accusation just a teeny bit.**
- 52. cuckold – to sleep with someone’s wife. Also a noun – the cuckold is the man whose wife has been seduced.**
- 53. dalliance – lolling away the time in amorous encounter.**
- 54. dandyism – excessive concern by a man about his clothes and appearance.**
- 55. defenestrate – to throw out the window. “The self-defenestration of stock brokers was one result of the 1929 market crash.”**
- 56. delectation – something very enjoyable, often referring to food. “The buffet offered a table full of delectations.”**
- 57. demimonde – a sort of netherworld of people who have low social status in the mainstream and hang together.**
- 58. dulcify – to sweeten.**
- 59. ejecta – matter that is ejected.**
- 60. euphonious – sounds good.**
- 61. expatiate – to elaborate in writing or spoken discourse.**
- 62. factotum – assistant who performs many different duties.**
- 63. farrago – a confused mixture; medley of songs.**

- 64. flapdoodle – nonsense.**
- 65. flimflam – deception, trickery, usually applied to con artists.**  
**George Scott played “the flimflam man” in a 1967 movie of the same name.**
- 66. flog – try to sell. “The author hit the bookstore circuit to flog her latest novel.”**
- 67. fozzle – to bungle; play clumsily. “The old gaffers thoroughly fozzled up an attempt to revisit their touch football days.”**
- 68. frisson – a sudden, passing sensation of excitement.**
- 69. gadarene swine – Biblical pigs into which Jesus banished evil spirits, the pigs then leaping to their deaths from a cliff.**  
**Humorist-par-excellence P.G. Wodehouse had one of his characters deliver the insult, “They are the direct lineal descendants of the gadarene swine.”**
- 70. gaggle – a flock of geese. Useful for describing groups of people, particularly when they are behaving in herd-like and annoying fashion.**
- 71. gallimaufry – a jumbled and confused medley.**
- 72. gambol – to skip about in a frisky manner.**
- 73. gimcrack – a showy but functionless trifle.**
- 74. grogshop – place to buy a drink.**
- 75. hector – to harass, irritate, continuously annoy.**
- 76. hepcat – a cool cat circa 1940s-50s, first in the bebop era, then the beatniks.**
- 77. hooch – alcohol, usually distilled and distributed illegally.**
- 78. hornswoggle – swindle.**

79. **imbroglio** – a very complicated misunderstanding or dispute.
80. **inamorata** – a woman who is the object of great love.
81. **incorporeal** – not having a material body.
82. **inebriant** – a drunk.
83. **infra dig** – beneath ones dignity.
84. **jaunty** – well turned out in an easy, sprightly manner; fashionably casual. “Consistent with the fashion in his culture, the African-American centerfielder wore his cap at a jaunty angle.”
85. **kerflooey** – ceases to function, suddenly and completely. “After hours of work, one misplaced part made the whole project go kerflooey.”
86. **kerfuffle** – commotion, disarray. “The meeting started off in an orderly fashion, but soon turned into an enormous kerfuffle.”
87. **lucubration** – working and studying hard, especially at night.
88. **marginalia** – notes in the margin; anything that elaborates on the main text with side comment.
89. **mellifluous** – flowing smoothly and sweetly, especially music.
90. **mollycoddle** – to pamper in a spoiling way; a man or boy who has been mollycoddled.
91. **monkeyshines** – a playful prank.
92. **moppet** – a young child.
93. **niminy-piminy** – delicate and refined in an affected way; effeminate.
94. **nipper** – small boy.

- 95. noble – defraud, swindle. “They were nobbled out of all their money by the real estate company.”**
- 100. noctambulist – a sleepwalker.**
- 101. noodle – the head, the noggin, the old bean.**
- 102. nubbin – a small stunted piece.**
- 103. nubble – a small lump or knob.**
- 104. omnificent – creating all things. “Black holes seem rather unlikely candidates for omnificence.”**
- 105. palooka – a washed up, incompetent fighter; a chump. “I coulda been a contender; now I’m just some palooka.”**
- 106. panache – great style and flamboyance.**
- 107. patois – a slang or regional dialect, embraced by a particular subculture or region.**
- 108. pawky – sly, cunning.**
- 109. peccant – guilty of a moral offense, or of breaking the law.**
- 110. peckerwood – an ignorant and provincial redneck.**
- 111. perambulate – to walk. Nicely alliterative with postprandial; a postprandial perambulation would be an after-dinner walk, if you happen to need a few extra syllables.**
- 112. peregrinate – to travel about, especially on foot. Distinguished from perambulate, which refers to a casual stroll. Peregrination is more of a purposeful journey.**
- 113. periphrasis – the use of a verbose or roundabout form of expression.**

114. **picaresque** – wandering all about. Don Quixote was the first picaresque novel, describing a protagonist who set out for hither and yon, and came upon various adventures.
115. **piquant** – agreeably spicy, provocative, gets your attention.
116. **pissoir** – street urinal for public use.
117. **pixilated** – somewhere between whimsical, silly, eccentric, or mentally disordered.
118. **plucky** – having a lot of spunk, stick-to-itiveness and bravery. Overachievers who work hard and keep getting up when they're knocked down can be described as plucky.
119. **poofter (poof)** – male homosexual.
120. **prestidigitation** – sleight of hand.
121. **raffish** – jaunty and rakish, a seducer of women, often in a tawdry sort of way.
122. **rascalion** – rascal, rogue.
123. **regenerate** – when used as an adjective, the sense in which it's been lost, it means morally uplifted, born again.
124. **rutting** – fornicating in different ways.
125. **sangfroid** – coolness and composure.
126. **sapient** – having great wisdom.
127. **sashay** – to stroll along with an eye toward observing, but more especially toward being observed. Hip movement varies according to gender and sexual orientation.
128. **scintilla** – the tiniest trace. “There's not a scintilla of evidence for her guilt, so why was she charged?”

- 129. scofflaw** – someone who deliberately flaunts the law, usually on small matters. Drivers who speed and run red lights are classic scofflaws. Or someone who neglects some income for tax purposes.
- 130. scrivener** – scribe; one who writes down the notes of the proceeding.
- 131. skosh** – a small bit. “I’ll take just a skosh of scotch.”
- 132. slaphappy** – very confused in a giddy, elated sort of way, often as the result of some intoxicating event.
- 133. snifter** – pear-shaped glass for an alcoholic beverage. “A couple snifters of brandy and he grew enchanted with the surroundings and the charm of his hostess.”
- 134. sobriquet** – nickname.
- 135. suss** – investigate; figure out.
- 136. swizzle** – tall drink; or gulping it down, or stirring it.
- 137. tinker** – to fiddle around clumsily and aimlessly, or someone who does so. The once-common expression “I don’t give a tinker’s damn” suggests extreme disinterest.
- 138. tipple** – to drink continuously, usually in small quantities. “The friends he met at the bar each Friday afternoon were well-known tipplers who made it down seven days a week.”
- 139. tittle** – follows “jot and.....” to suggest extreme attention to detail. “In ironing out the contract, we resolved every last jot and tittle.”
- 140. toggery** – clothes; togs.
- 141. toilette** – the bathroom, as well as the business that takes place in it, and the products that are used in it.

- 142. toothsome – attractive, desirable. “Our waitress was indeed a toothsome lass.”**
- 143. tootle – to move along in a very leisurely manner.**
- 144. truculent – irritable, hostile, speaking harshly and acting aggressively.**
- 145. twaddle – nonsense, silly talk or writing.**
- 146. ululate – to wail or howl.**
- 147. vagary – the seemingly random turns of fate; usually refers to the more disagreeable ones.**
- 148. vex – to agitate, fill with anxiety.**
- 149. wag – a wise and witty person. Often used with slight irony to suggest gasbags who think they are wise and witty.**