

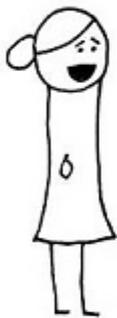
**People literally use
literally too much**

ANNOYING:

People who use “literally”
incorrectly

WHEN I SAW
HOW MUCH IT
COST, MY HEAD
LITERALLY
EXPLODED!

YOU SEEM TO
HAVE HEALED
SURPRISINGLY
WELL.



WAY MORE ANNOYING:

People who use “literally”
unnecessarily

I LITERALLY
DROVE MY CAR
TO WORK TODAY!

BUT-
...YES, I SUPPOSE
YOU DID.



I try not to be a word snob. You don't read me complaining about bad grammar or “the death of language” in society. People talk and write as they do. I'm not trying to be

anyone's literary conscience. But, people literally use literally too much.

People literally don't know what literally means

It's pretty obvious I love words. Even if you haven't read blog posts where I've actually stated that, it's fairly evident. I mean, I took up writing, for gosh sake and I'm an avid reader. Plus, you know, erudite blogging.

But, sometimes people use expressions that, really, they don't truly know what they mean. Take "literally", for example.

So many people add this word to a sentence or statement thinking it adds emphasis when all it really does is add "fat".

Simply, "literally" means "exactly". But, it often serves as an unnecessary addition to a perfectly understandable sentence.

"I was literally surprised by his reaction."

Here's a trick. Every time you're tempted to use "literally" in your sentence, add "exactly" and see if it sounds doofy.

"I was exactly surprised by his reaction."

See? Doofy. Just boot the word entirely. It's even more senseless than "very".

"It was the first time I had seen her in months. She was now very pregnant."

So, of course, no more pregnant than the last time she was seen, just further along in the pregnancy. The idea is that the "very" signifies she is showing her pregnancy more. It's a bit lazy, but still better than "literally". And if it keep people from using literally using literally too much, I'll take the trade.

People use figuratively too little

Another odd use of "literally" comes with the grammar-bending misunderstanding of its meaning so much that it actually ends up being opposite of what the speaker/writer intends.

"I was literally floored when I heard the news."

Um. If the "news" is that gravity is back on or the news is so loud the sound waves knock you down, you are cool. Otherwise, probably not "literally" floored.

More correctly, the phrase would be:

"I was floored when I heard the news, figuratively speaking."

Sure, that's a mouthful. Probably not used all that much except in writing. Once again, you can boot the "literally" from the sentence. Keep faith that your speaking partner understands the subtle distinction between your surprise and you being clobbered to the ground.

There is no word police to worry about

True. It's not a crime to when people literally use literally too much. It is a bit silly sounding, though. Especially to people who know what the word means.

As opposed to those who know what the word implies. But, as the cartoon attached to this post shows, it doesn't add anything to the sentence and can sometimes make the speaker sound...literally...not so smart.

People literally use literally too much

I'm going to stop now. The post has already come dangerously close to Snobville. It's not my intent, but it's almost impossible to have a discussion about grammar without it coming off as "elitist".

Yes, I love words. And yes, I love when others use them well. Today's world of texting and social media postings values speed and brevity over spelling and form. So, I see why there are shortcuts.

Just, in this case, it's more about not understanding the word at all. The fact is, there really aren't many times it's useful in general conversation.

People literally use literally too much. That's exactly the truth.