

20 Examples of Great Euphemisms

A euphemism is “the substitution of a mild, indirect or vague term for one considered to be harsh, blunt, or offensive”. Sometimes called doublespeak, a euphemism is a word or phrase which pretends to communicate but doesn’t. It makes the bad seem good, the negative seem positive, the unnatural seem natural, the unpleasant seem attractive, or at least tolerable. It is language which avoids, shifts or denies responsibility. It conceals or prevents thought.

Doublespeak was one of the central themes of George Orwell’s famous novel, *1984*, although he didn’t use that term, instead he used the terms “doublethink” and “newspeak”.

Here are some particularly amusing examples, except where downright offensive.

1. If you are offered a **career change** or an **early retirement opportunity**, a **career or employee transition**, or you are being **involuntarily separated**, or if **personnel is being realigned** or there is a **surplus reduction in personnel**, or the **staff is being re-engineered or right sized**, or if there is a **workforce imbalance correction** then: You’re fired!



(Cartoon by Kipper Williams)

2. You aren’t poor, you are **economically disadvantaged**.
3. You aren’t broke, you have **temporary negative cash flow**.
4. You do not live in a slum but in **substandard housing**, or in an **economically depressed neighborhood**, or **culturally deprived environment**.
5. If you are **managing company stakeholders**, that means you are lobbying, which is really the same as bribing.
6. When you get an unwanted phone call just as you are sitting down to dinner from a representative of the Republican party (and you are a Democrat) or vice versa, this is called a **courtesy call**. Only courtesy has nothing to do with it, it’s just freaking annoying.
7. In light of the recent demise of Osama bin Laden, several politicians have stressed that it was the **enhanced interrogation methods** which caused the informants to squeal and give up the nickname of the courier, which we then followed around until he led us to the compound of OBL. This is one of my personal favorites, not

the process it refers to of course, but the absolute ludicrousness of this particular phrase. The ultimate of euphemism. It's torture, folks! Torture, and you can't sugarcoat it, and you can't make it sound nice. Torture.

8. Since we've been involved in two wars for ten years, stuff happens, stuff that we don't want to happen. When you come into a country and break it, for a variety of good reasons, you might cause some **collateral damage**, which are really deaths of civilians. Women and children and old people. Accidental death. Accidental – but you can't quite escape the “death” part.
9. When a geographical area is **neutralized or depopulated** that means the CIA killed people, just because.
10. On a lighter note, **intelligent ventilation points**, when speaking of a garment are – armholes!
11. You're not buying a used car, you are purchasing a **pre-owned, pre-enjoyed or pre-loved vehicle**.
12. If you are a bank, bad, crappy debts are non- or **under-performing assets**.
13. Ah, **genuine imitation leather**. That new car smell. But really, it's cheesy vinyl. 100% virgin cheesy vinyl.
14. If you want a raise and you deserve a raise, but there's no money or the company just doesn't want to do it, you might get an **uptitle** instead, which is a fancy name for what you already are. Uptitles are fancy job names given in lieu of monetary compensation. An example: Assistant Supervisor of Things Beginning with the Letter “A”.
15. Watch out if the company you work for says it is **levering up**, it means they are spending money they don't have. See “uptitle” above.
16. If you say you **committed terminological inexactitude**, or you **relayed misinformation, misspoke** or were **economical with the truth**, well that means you just told a whopper. A bold-faced lie.
17. If you are a politician in Arizona, people who run across the border are **illegal aliens**, unless they are employing these same people to tend to their children or flower gardens, then they are known as undocumented workers.
18. We consume **adult** beverages which are booze drinks, beer and wine and hard stuff. Adults also drink things like water, coffee and tea but these aren't called adult beverages, just beverages. There's adult entertainment too, and we know what that means. So attaching the adjective “adult” to a noun, must mean the same as “sleazy” or “bad for you”.
19. If you get rejected for a job because you are **partially proficient**, that means you are just plain unqualified. This happens a lot to the middle class, as they attempt to find employment in other areas because the areas in which they used to work no longer exist.
20. Here's the one that really hurts. When you're called **postmenopausal**, or **mature**, or **senior** – that means you're old.