

# GRAB BAG

Miscellany

## What's a Whirler?

Words even the dictionary doesn't know.

BY SID LERNER

**N**EW WORDS enter the language more quickly than ever before—so fast, in fact, that even the best standardized dictionaries, though updated every two years, miss many of the most current buzzwords and phrases.

Three years ago, Harold LeMay, Marian Taylor, and I collected more than 300 new words for the first edition of the *New Words Dictionary*. This fall, Ballantine will publish the second edition—an update with more than 600 words at the cutting edge.

Some of our new words will find their way into upcoming major dictionaries. Others will prove fleeting. Even if a word has a short life, however, it's important to know what it means while it is appearing in headlines and talk shows. These words and phrases are in frequent use now.

Learn them, or you'll never know a dink from a skotey.

**advid** (ADD-vid) *n.* An advertising videotape, most frequently used to demonstrate the strong points of an applicant for college or a job.

**agita** (AJ-it-uh) *n.* An Italian word meaning, colloquially, acid indigestion. Agita is gaining currency as a description of the distress induced by unpleasant social circumstances.

**belt bag** *n.* The so-called "fanny packs" popular with skiers and hikers have crossed over into city use as a substitute for handbags and casual wear.

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**boomerang** *n.* Slang for a grown child who has lived away from home and returns to live with his or her parents.

**Bowash** *n.* Real-estate term for the Boston-to-Washington corridor.

**cocooning** *n.* The spending of leisure time in the comfort of the home rather than in public places of amusement.

**D.B.** *n.* Shortened form for the "drop-by," a Washington social ploy involving an arrival at a party, a quick shaking of hands, a circle of the room, and a speedy exit.

**dink** *n.* Acronym for "double income, no kids"; trendy, upscale.

**feemail** *n.* A derogatory Wall Street term for the legal fees generated by litigation settling "green-mail" disputes.

**flyover people** *n.* A television-industry term referring to the TV-viewing public living between the major production cities of New York and Los Angeles—presumably less sophisticated people.

**fuzzword** *n.* An apparently precise word that nevertheless confuses communication; elegant gobbledegook that gives the impression of clarity and sense while deliberately obfuscating.

**glowboy** *n.* A nuclear-power plant employee who does maintenance work in the plant's dangerously radioactive areas.

**granola** *n.* Updated word for "bohemian": an individual whose lifestyle is earthy, unconventional, and self-designed.

**hothousing** *n.* The trend toward the early educational stimulation of infants and toddlers—the "super-baby" phenomenon—the effects of which still remain to be proved.

**kidult** *n.* A television-industry term for a viewer between the ages of 12 and 34.

**mushroom** *n.* A hairstyle popularized by athletes, the mushroom leaves only a round or square mat of hair on top of the head. The rest of the head is clean-shaven.

**net-net** *adj.* Final; the last word; the conclusion reached after all elements have been added and subtracted.

**new-collar** *adj.* New-collar workers are the middle class of the baby boom, who earn \$20,000 to \$40,000 per year.

**oxygen bar** *n.* A newly popular Japanese type of "bar" at which customers pay to breathe oxygen to reach a euphoric state.

**podmall** *n.* Also known as a convenience center, the podmall is a small shopping center.

**puddle** *n.* A subsection of a company's inventory, usually containing only one of the product types included in the company's overall inventory, or pool.

**quant** *n.* A stock market "whiz kid" analyst. Quants were named for their quantitative, mathematical methods.

**skotey** (SKOH-tee) *n.* Acronym for "spoiled kid of the eighties." The baby boom kids of the baby boom, skoteys represent 4.2 percent of the population.

**slammer** *n.* In a telephone sales "boiler room" operation, the slammer is the expert high-pressure salesman who makes the pitch.

**surimi** (Suh-REE-mee) *n.* Imitation shellfish meat made from shredded fish, mostly pollock. Popular in Japan.



**toyetic** *adj.* Having the potential for being translated into a popular toy, as for example the movie character Rambo or the characters and gadgets from the film *Star Wars*.

**whirler** *n.* A member of the super-fashionable, high-society set of wealthy people conspicuous in the social "whirl."

**wunk** *n.* Slang for the teenage music hits of the 1960s—WASP funk—which is currently enjoying a modest revival.

**SID LERNER** returned from a trip abroad just after the ABSCAM scandal broke, and wondered what the term ABSCAM meant. The president of his own product-development firm in New York, Lerner immediately realized that the world needs a repository of fast-breaking language, so he teamed with editor Marian Taylor and word buff Harold LeMay to create the *New Words Dictionary*.

His first book, published in 1983, was *Monday Morning Quarterback*, which invited fans to second-guess play selections made by NFL teams in actual game situations. Lerner, who holds a 1953 SU degree in English and journalism, is now collaborating with Hal Drucker, also Class of 1953, on a celebrity photo volume titled *From the Desk Of*, due out next year.