

LOOKING AT YOURSELF AS A WRITER

Misused words

Most writers choose the wrong word now and then, but if you find yourself misusing a great many words, consider why. Here are some common causes and cures.

CAUSE You have a fondness for fancy words, such as *penultimate*, that are not in your active vocabulary.

CURE Write in a simpler style. Readers appreciate plain English more than you may think. (See W4-a and W4-b.) *Penultimate* probably isn't in their active vocabulary either.

CAUSE You tend to mix up easily confused words such as *accept* and *except*.

CURE Turn to the Glossary of Usage (W1) whenever you are in doubt about such words. Or consult a dictionary.

CAUSE Your vocabulary is not as strong as you'd like it to be.

CURE This cure will take time. The best way to improve your vocabulary is to read, and the best way to develop the habit of reading is to choose articles and books that you enjoy. Seeing new words used properly, in context, will help you learn to use them in your own writing.