

Solutions: Embarrassing Usage Mistakes

1. Baited breath Should be **bated** breath from the verb *abate*, which means to stop or lessen.
2. Boldface lie Should be **bald-faced** lie, meaning someone is openly lying.
3. Chalk full Should be **chock**-full, from an old English word meaning *full to the brim*.
4. Do diligence Should be **due** diligence, a legal term.
5. First-come, first-serve Should be first-come, first-**served**. Without the “d,” the phrase means the first one to come is the one who serves the rest.
6. Given free reign Should be given free **rein**, referring to giving a horse freedom to move.
7. Honed in Hone means to sharpen. To **home** in means to advance toward a goal.
8. I could care less Should be I **couldn't** care less. The first phrase suggests the speaker still cares.
9. Irregardless This is not a word. **Regardless** is the proper word.
10. Must of/should of The *ofs* should be **have**. [The contractions, e.g. must've, cause the confusion.]
11. Mute point Should be **moot** point. Mute means silent; moot means doubtful.
12. Peaked my interest Should be **piqued** my interest, meaning it stimulated interest.
13. Per say Should be **per se**, from the Latin meaning *in itself*.
14. Piece of mind Should be **peace** of mind to show tranquility.
15. Shoe-in Should be **shoo-in** to indicate an easy winner. To shoo is to urge something in a particular direction.
16. Slight of hand Should be **sleight** of hand. A slight is an insult; sleight indicates cunning or dexterity.
17. Through the ringer Should be through the **wringer**, which was an device used to press water out of washed clothes.
18. Tie me over Should be **tide** me over, referring to the ocean's tides, which can move boats when winds do not.
19. Tow the line Should be **toe** the line, which refers to runners putting their toes to a line prior to a race. The saying means following the rules.
20. Wet your appetite Should be **whet** your appetite. To whet is to stimulate or sharpen.