

# WORD WOES

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## Casual rules for the selection of words

The etching *WORD WOES* is a small dictionary made up of words of the same spelling in English and Afrikaans but with totally different meanings. The meanings contained in its expressions are meant to be straight-forward, easily understandable, aimed at astonishment and admiration for their linguistic flair. I hope to ambush a certain slice of our bi-lingual society with the work's quaintness and I mean to keep them at a standstill for some time in front of the work, pondering the marvelousness of our differences. Preference is given to words that are more or less easily identifiable and that might cause the greater interest.

My friends playfully came up with two small sentences that read true for both languages: "My hand is in warm water" or "My pen is in my hand." Unfortunately all these words are totally synonymous for Afrikaans and English and none such totally similar words are admitted in *WORD WOES*. Entries were omitted if they did not succeed as excellent examples of a true kind of *difference*.

Words that might normally be accepted in the game of *Scrabble* are suitable, but note the following relaxed rules:

No synonyms (*PLATTER ROOSTER* works with words spelled exactly the same, but that carry no similarities of meaning):

- Similarly spelled and synonymous words are unsuitable: *hang, arm, hand, bale, was, drank, hinder, note, verse, rose, grief, pan, vat, ring, stand, sending, spanning, slinger, sing, genies, plot, etc.*
- Even a slight sense of synonymity is also reason for disqualification. *Elf*, for example, is good in the sense of number eleven (Afrikaans), but as Santa's little helper (same meaning in English and Afrikaans) it is disqualified. Other words like *slot, pure, blank, mark (market), grade, rose and tasting* also have too much synonymity for inclusion.

No informal, colloquial or seldom used words.

- *dink* – 'to think' in Afrikaans and a partner in a well-off working couple with no children in informal English.
- *dwang* – 'coercion' in Afrikaans and 'serious trouble' in colloquial English.
- *vader* – 'father' in Afrikaans and a character from the *Star Wars* films in English.
- *swat* – 'to hit or slap' in English and 'to study' in informal Afrikaans.
- *gal* – 'girl' in informal English and 'contents of the gallbladder' in Afrikaans.
- *loon* – 'salary' in Afrikaans and 'silly person' in informal English.
- *gees* – 'spirit' in Afrikaans and exclamations of surprise in informal English
- *toon* – 'toe' in Afrikaans and 'cartoon film' in informal English.

- \* An exception was made in the case of 'vroom' because, even though it is informal English, it has a great onomatopaeic ring to it and is often used. I guess that most (perhaps all) words progressed from a time or sense in which they had been informal. The invention of text and printed matter created rules and formality.

No scientific, overly technical or pedantic words

- *bots* – 'to crash' in Afrikaans and in English the plural of *bot*, the larva of the botfly, also an abbreviation for 'robots'.
- *tor* – 'bug' in Afrikaans and a hill or 'rocky peak' in English

No foreign or archaic words:

- *tome* – 'reins of a horse' in Afrikaans and 'book' in old English.
- *nog* – 'small block or peg of wood' and short for 'eggnog' in English. In Afrikaans it means 'more'.
- *brag* – 'to bring' archaic Afrikaans and 'to boast' in English
- *rust* – 'oxidation' in English and 'to rest' in archaic Afrikaans
- *ween* – 'to be of opinion' in archaic English and 'to cry' in Afrikaans
- *lam* – 'to hit', a verb in nineteenth century English and 'lamb' in Afrikaans.

No proper names or words beginning with capital letters are allowed:

- *Mars/mars* English (two meanings: 1. the planet Mars, and 2. to spoil); Afrikaans (to march)
- *Rooms* is acceptable in English, but the Afrikaans *Rooms* is rejected (a proper name pertaining to the Roman Catholic Church).

Words in which the application is strained or hardly ever used:

- *staker* – in Afrikaans 'one who ceases to work' and in seldom used English 'one who drives in a stake'.
- *suffer* – 'more mentally worn out' in strained Afrikaans and 'to encounter bad or unpleasant things' in English

No abbreviations:

- *bros* ('brothers' in English)
- *gat* (informal and an abbreviation for 'Gatling' gun in English)
- *mag* – 'power' in Afrikaans and a 'magazine' in English
- *vet* – an exception and included. An abbreviation for 'veterinarian' and 'obese' in Afrikaans.
- *veg* – an exception and included. An abbreviation for 'vegetables', and 'to fight' in Afrikaans.

No diacritical marks:

- *reel/reels*, to stagger or a film spool in English is acceptable, but *reël/reëls*, rule and rules in Afrikaans have a dieresis and are excluded
- *blase*, Blisters in Afrikaans, but *blasé* in English has an acute accent mark and is not accepted

Where meanings are close for some entries, especially of the same word in its plural or in a certain grammatical sense, only the entry with the most letters will be chosen

- *gun/guns* – take only *guns*
- *die/dies* – take only *dies*
- *kale/kales* – take only *kales*

Exceptions:

- *re-use* or *reuse* is sometimes spelled with a hyphen in British English and without one in American English and because of its rarity in the list (the *eu-*) it is included.
- The word ‘week’ is entered as ‘a period of seven days’ – English and as ‘weak or ineffective’ and ‘to soak’ in Afrikaans. But, *week* is also ‘a period of seven days’ in Afrikaans. In *WORD WOES* this synonymy is of course an oversight