

101 TOTALLY UNNECESSARY
REDUNDANCIES

(plus 30 spares, just in case)

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Illustrated by Rick Menard

New York
2020

This is a work of creative fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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Redundancy of language is never found with deep reflection. Verbiage may indicate observation, but not thinking. He who thinks much says but little in proportion to his thoughts.

– Washington Irving

There is an enormous redundancy in every well-written book. With a well-written book I only read the right-hand page and allow my mind to work on the left-hand page. With a poorly written book I read every word.

– Marshall McLuhan

Thanks – to the redundancy of language, yxx cxn xndxrstxnd whxt x xm wrxtxng xvxn xf x rxplxcx xll thx vxwxls wxth xn "x" (t gts lttl hrdr f y dn't vn kn whr th wvls r)

– Steven Pinker
The Language Instinct

To Tanya, with all my love

This book is dedicated to my wife Tanya who is a professor of psycholinguistics, the study of the cognitive aspects of language. She taught me that the rules of language reflect the way we speak, not the other way around. So is the title of this book a redundancy or an oxymoron? Logical redundancy does not mean that we are wasting “totally unnecessary” words. Redundancies are like musical chords. That’s why we are surrounded on all sides by “tiny specks,” “sharp points,” “usual routines,” “foreign imports,” “identical copies,” and “annoying pests” (not to mention “hot water heaters”). Redundancies help turn 2D black and white language into 3D living color. This is a book celebrating redundancies, but really it is a book celebrating the playfulness of language. Language asks to be taken for granted, but every once in a while, it is nice to take a moment to appreciate how we are all members of a species of natural poets.

CONTENTS

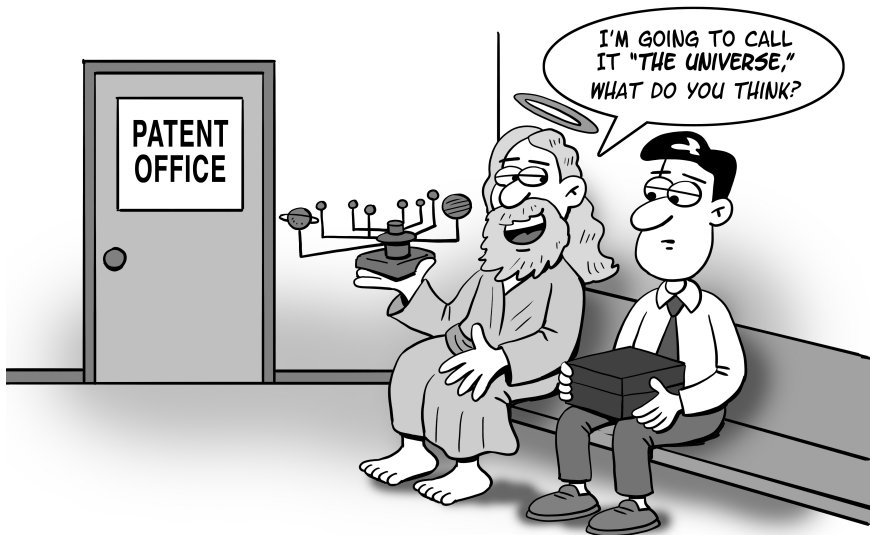
I.	INTRODUCING REDUNDANCY FOR THE FIRST TIME	7
II.	REDUNDANCY STILL CONTINUES	9
III.	RECYCLED REDUNDANCIES	17
IV.	REDUNDANCIES AHEAD	21
V.	COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY REDUNDANCIES	33
VI.	REDUNDANT POSITIONS	43
VII.	REDUNDANT SHAPES	53
VIII.	ALTERNATIVE REDUNDANCIES	59
IX.	FEELING REDUNDANT	69
X.	THE COST OF REDUNDANCY	81
XI.	ADDED REDUNDANCY	87
XII.	SPARE REDUNDANCIES	105

I. INTRODUCING REDUNDANCY FOR THE FIRST TIME

1. **Introducing for the first time** (which is much more introductory than introducing for the second time)



2. **Original inventor** (unlike the person who comes up with a new invention after everyone else)



See also:

3. **Novel innovations** (new ideas that we are all sick and tired of hearing about for the umpteenth time)

4. **First conceived** (and then conceived a second time just to make sure)



See also:

5. **Originally created** (the second step after being first conceived)

6. **New beginning** (which takes place after the previous beginning but before the next beginning)



7. **Earlier in time** (the point in the space-time continuum just before the exact moment at which things happen earlier in space)

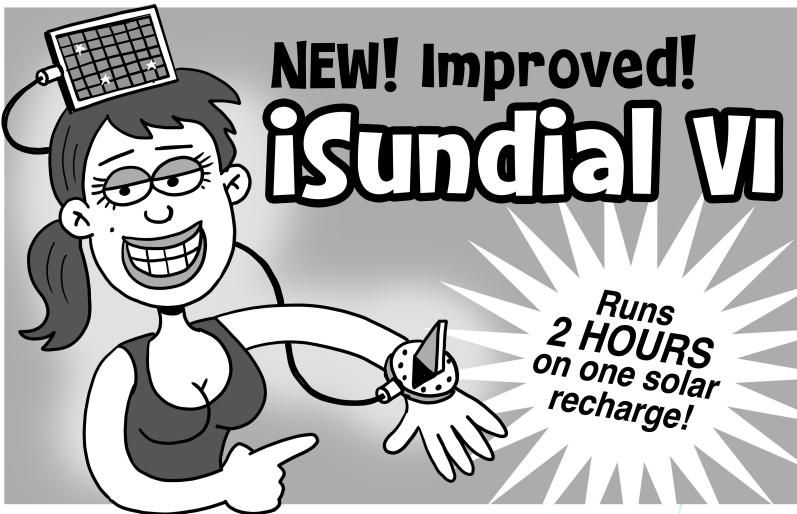


8. **Past history** (the history written about long ago, before anyone knew that any of this stuff had happened)



II. REDUNDANCY STILL CONTINUES

9. ~~Still~~ continues (long after things that do not continue have stopped continuing)



10. **Usual routine** (unlike routines that you perform only once before moving the brand new exercycle to the attic)

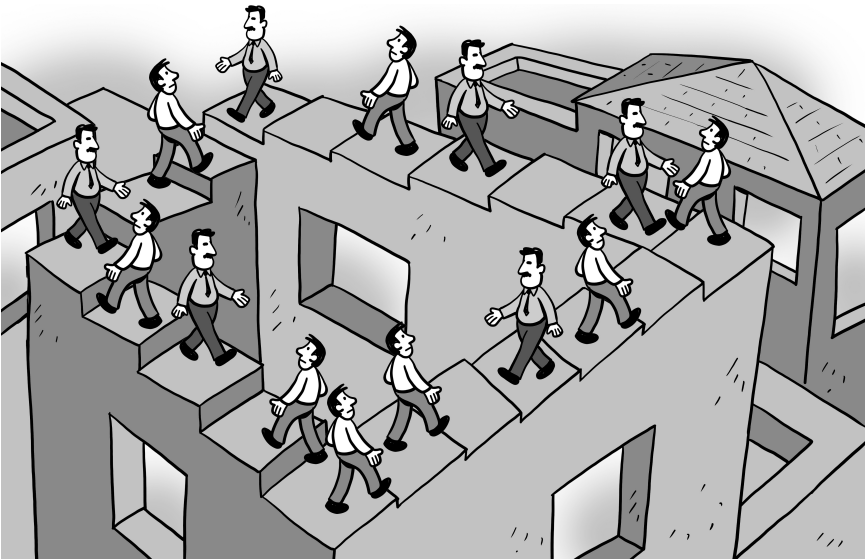


III. RECYCLED REDUNDANCIES

16. Repeat ~~again~~ (and again and again and again, and so on and so forth, etc. etc.)



17. Etc. ~~etc.~~ (etc.)



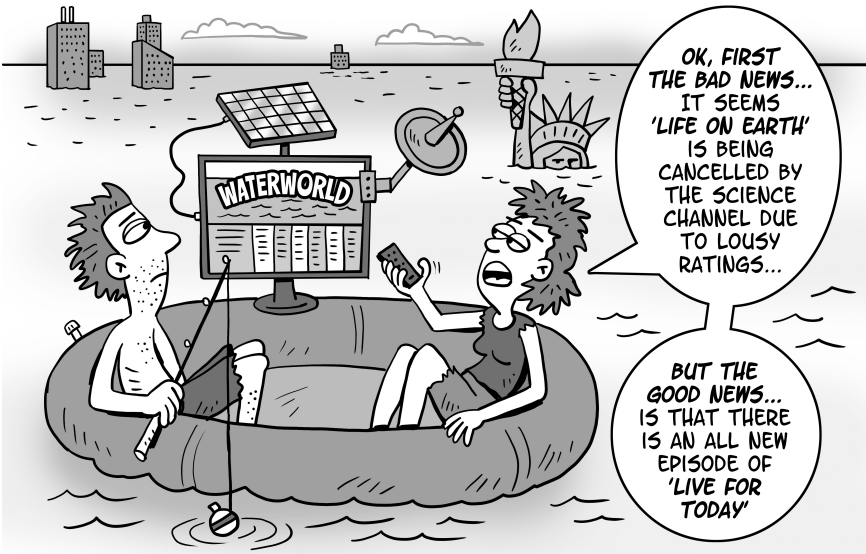
Museum visitors search in vain for the MC Escher Exhibit

18. ~~Déjà vu all over again~~ (does that mean you feel like you were here once before or three times before?)



IV. REDUNDANCY BACKUP PLANS

20. ~~Final~~ **conclusion** (which will hopefully not be the final conclusion to which we seem to be headed)



21. **Final ultimatum** (delivered after you completely ignored all our previous ultimatums and just before our next final ultimatum)



22. **Future plans** (plans that we will not make until later, after it is too late)



See also:

23. **Advance planning** (which never works as well as planning for things that have already happened)

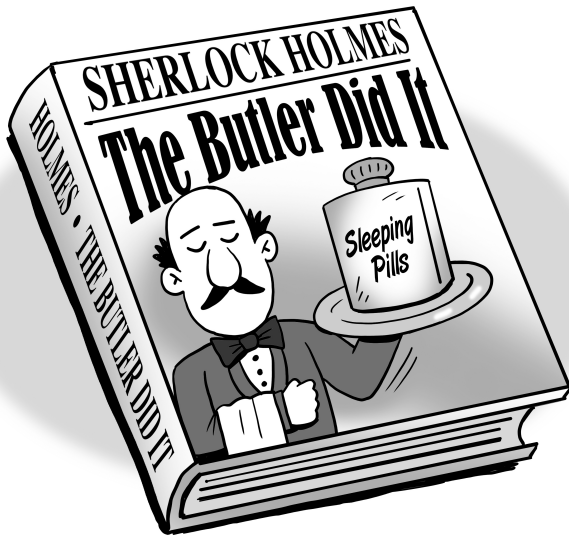
26. **Unexpected surprise** (unlike those surprises that come with advance warning)



27. **Future prediction** (a prediction that, surprisingly, has not yet been made)



28. ~~Unsolved~~ mystery (which is why we need spoiler alerts)



29. Postpone ~~until later~~ (in case you don't have time right now to procrastinate)

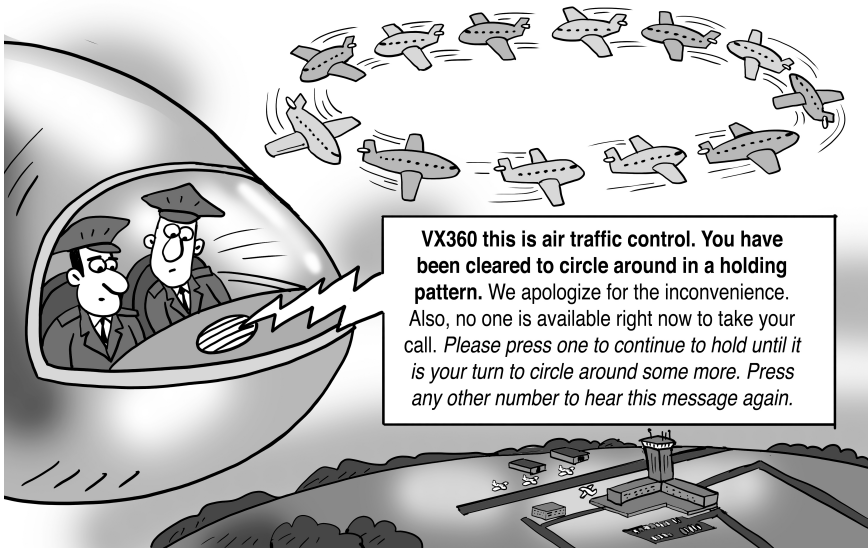


V. COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY REDUNDANCIES

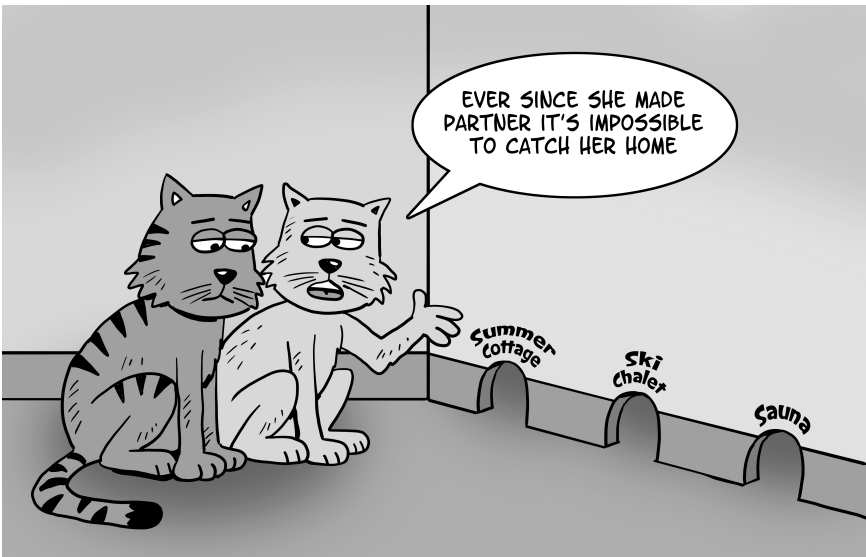
30. **Completely** surrounded (much worse than being surrounded only on one side)



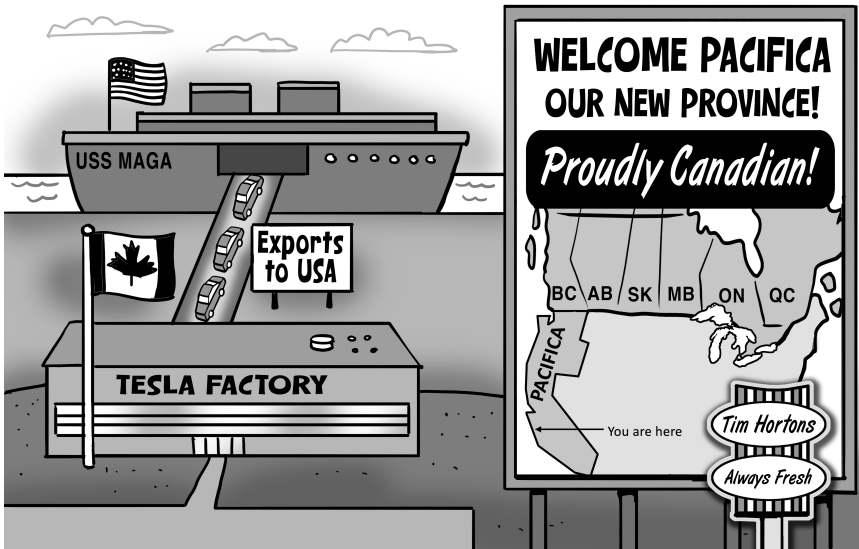
31. Circle around (and around and around and around)



33. **Empty hole** (on average, empty holes are twice as deep as a half-empty hole)



34. **Foreign imports** (which cost much less than the domestic imports we produce here at home)



35. **Final destination** (unlike all those places along the way where your five-year-old asks, “Are we there yet?”)



See also:

36. **Start out** (otherwise you may end up *inside* your destination)

37. **Close proximity** (the distance between two people talking on their cell phones – but not to each other!)



38. **Safe haven** (unlike those havens where even daredevils fear to go)



39. **Wall mural** (should not be purchased without checking with the building inspector)

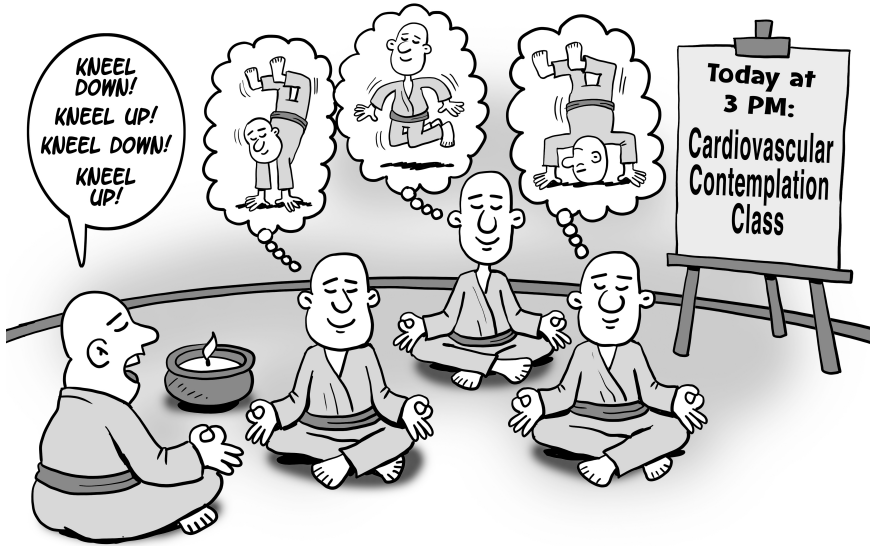


VI. REDUNDANT POSITIONS

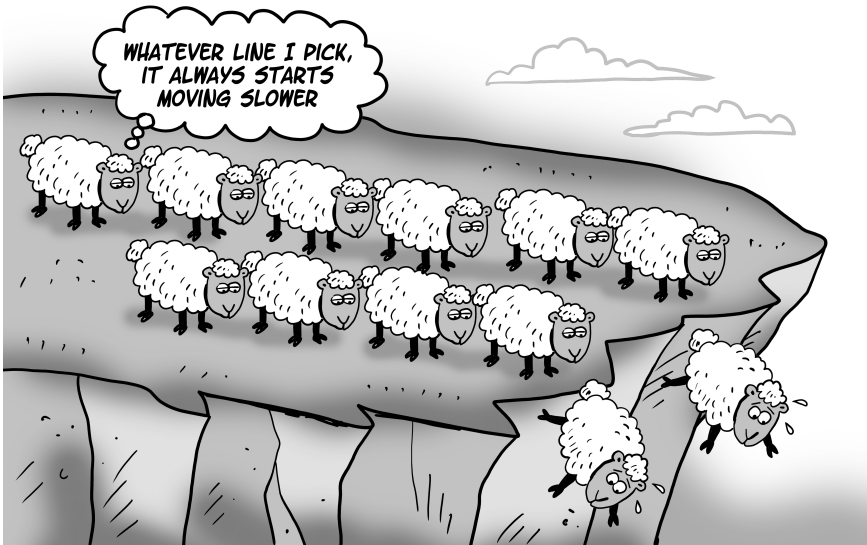
40. **Falling down** (much easier than falling up, as happens after drinking too much at a frat party)



41. **Kneel down** (which takes far less skill than kneeling up)



42. **Follow after** (until you catch up with everyone who is leading from behind)



See also:

43. **Lag behind** (and do it quickly!)
44. **Proceed ahead** (otherwise you may find yourself proceeding afoot)
45. **Hurry up** (but you will get to the coast faster if you hurry sideways)
46. **Slow down** (is this the opposite of slow up or hurry down?)

50. **Lift up** (in order to arrive at the height at which things can be safely lifted down)



See also:

51. **All-time record** (not to be confused with the all-distance record)

52. **Written down** (which makes it so much easier to read up on a topic)



Earliest known shopping list

VII. REDUNDANT SHAPES

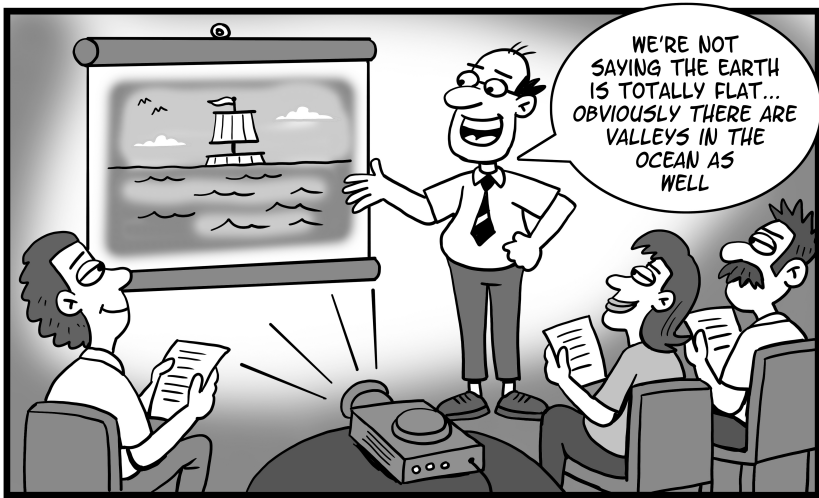
54. **Tiny speck** (a speck that is small enough to easily fit on a sharp point)



See also:

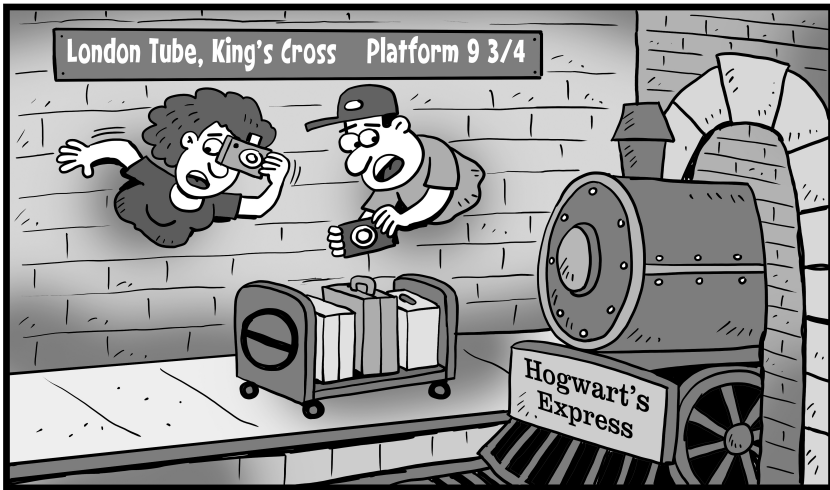
55. **Sharp point** (in contrast with “point spreads” and “man points” that spread out all over the place)

56. **Totally flat** (which is not nearly as bumpy as a surface that is only a wee bit flat)



Alchemist Fred Bunson addresses the monthly meeting of the Flat Earth Society.

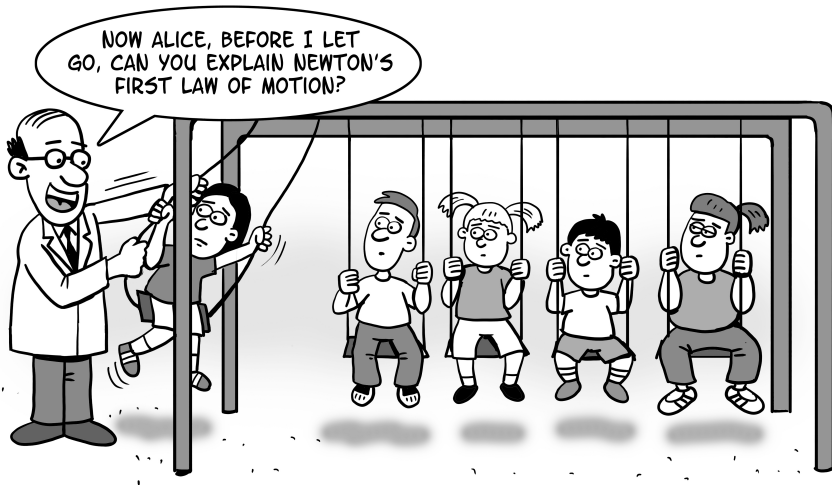
57. **Hollow tube** (which is like a solid tube except that it is hollow)



Larry and Peg Rittleharper find themselves caught in a world famous tourist trap.

VIII. ALTERNATIVE REDUNDANCIES

64. **Vacillate ~~back and forth~~** (can take twice as long as vacillating in one direction only)



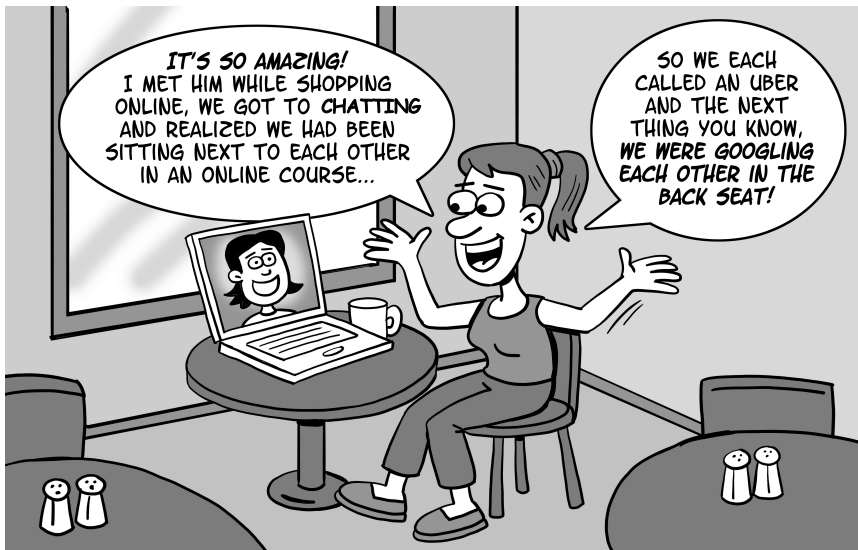
68. **Blend together** (First measure each ingredient and blend together individually, being careful not to let the ingredients separate together.)



See also:

69. **Merge together** (as when train rails meet at the horizon ... *and then go on to cross sides and separate again once you cannot see them*)

70. **Connect together** (which is what we did before social media trained us to connect remotely)

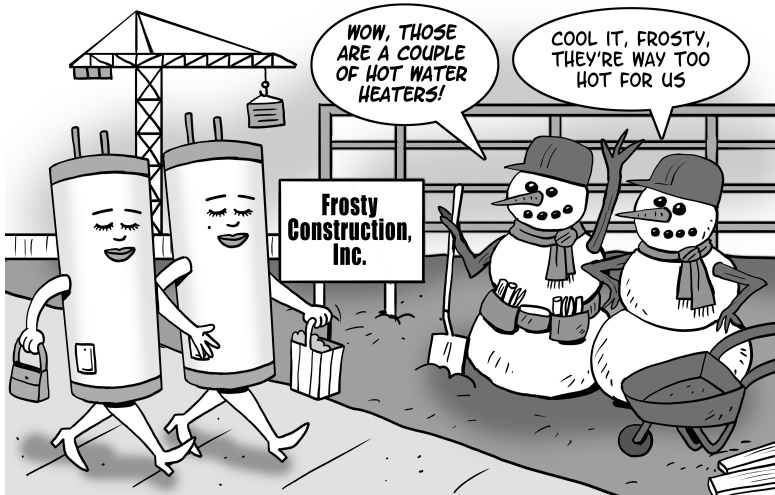


71. **Component parts** (another name for DIY furniture)



IX. FEELING REDUNDANT

73. ~~Hot~~ water heater (wait...why would you need a heater for water that is already hot?)



See also:

74. ~~Hot~~ fires (which are identical to cold fires except for the temperature, the flame, and the smoke)

75. ~~Heat up~~ (until things start to cool ~~down~~)

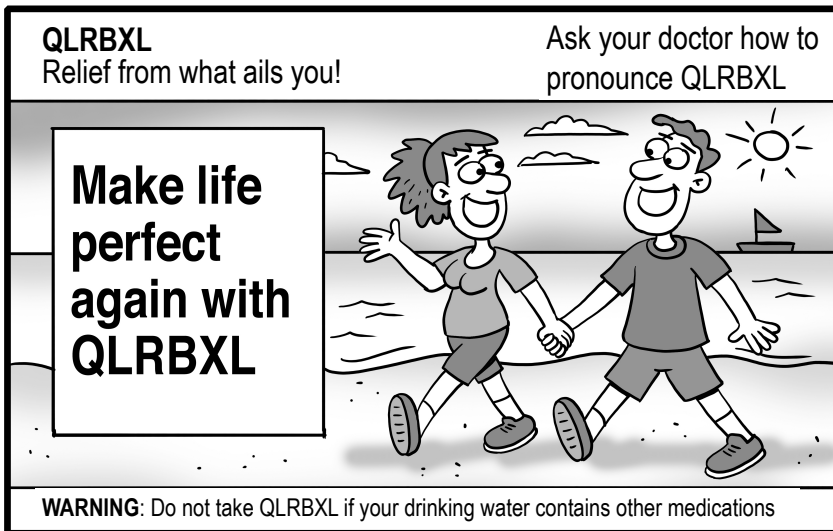
76. ~~Freezing~~ cold (the temperature at which ice freezes and turns into ~~frozen~~ ice)

77. **Completely disappears** (unlike something that disappears but you can still see it)

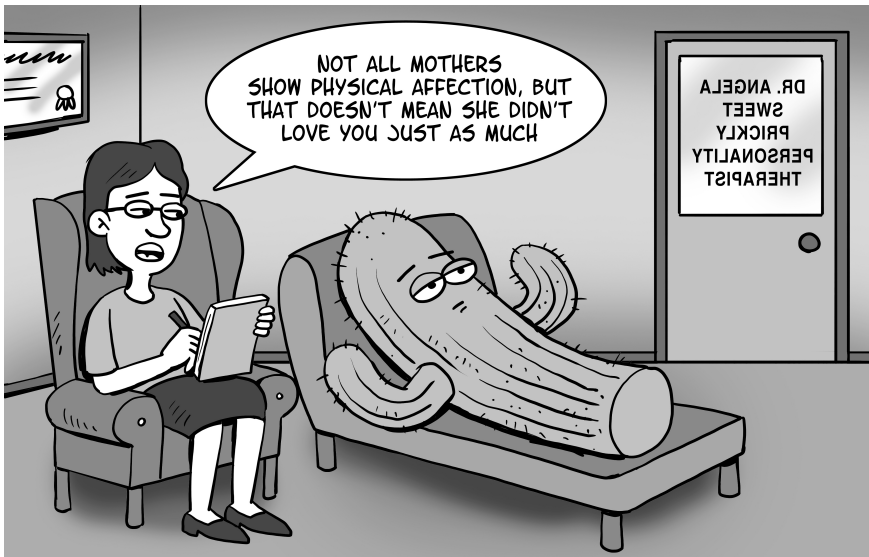


WARNING: Sunscreen does not completely disappear!

78. ~~Crystal~~ clear (as in water polluted by millions of plastic bottles, each filled by hand with sparkling water from a small snow-capped mountain spring)



80. **Prickly cactus** (lacking in people skills compared to cacti that are soft and cuddly)



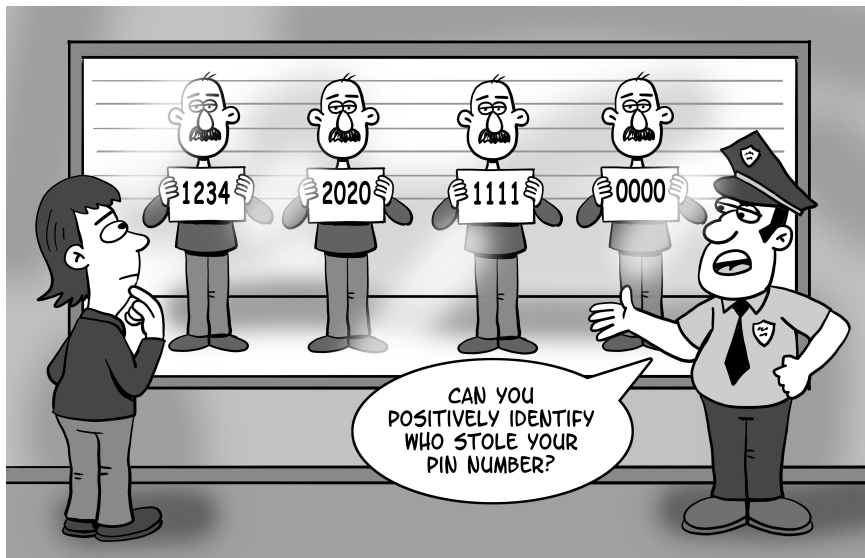
82. **Completely** unrecognizable (such as the perfect stranger you ran into at the supermarket)



See also:

83. **Perfect** stranger (while most strangers are incredibly nice, intelligent, honest, and hard-working, let's face it, nobody's perfect)

84. **Positive identification** (which is easier than listing all the people whom you do not recognize)

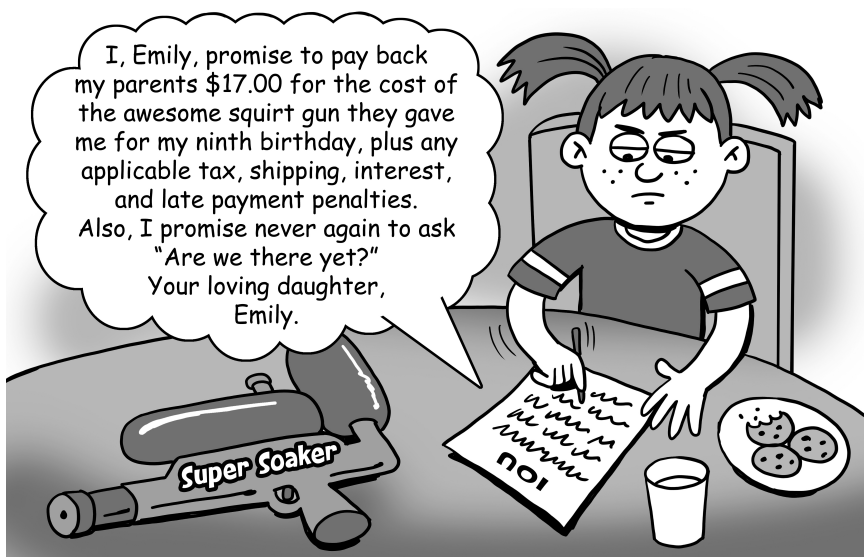


See also:

85. **Might possibly** (or do you mean it might not impossibly?)
86. **Absolutely certain** (the feeling you get when you state something that you're not sure about, but then someone else disagrees)

X. THE COST OF REDUNDANCY

88. **Free gift** (Didn't you just hate it when your parents made you pay them back for your birthday presents?)



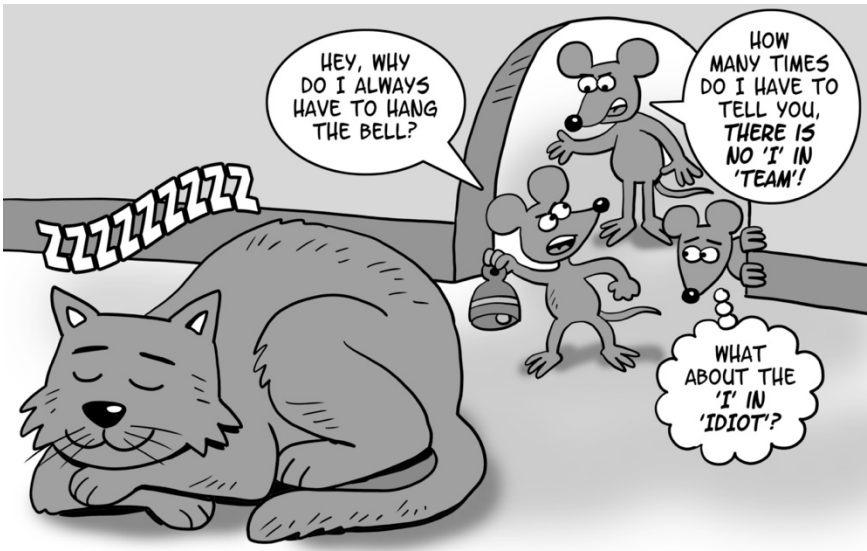
See also:

89. **Aid and abet** (which helps the recipient twice as much as when you offer aid but are too stingy to also abet)

90. ~~Absolutely~~ free (or your money back)

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92. **Joint collaboration** (which is easier to coordinate than trying to collaborate with yourself)

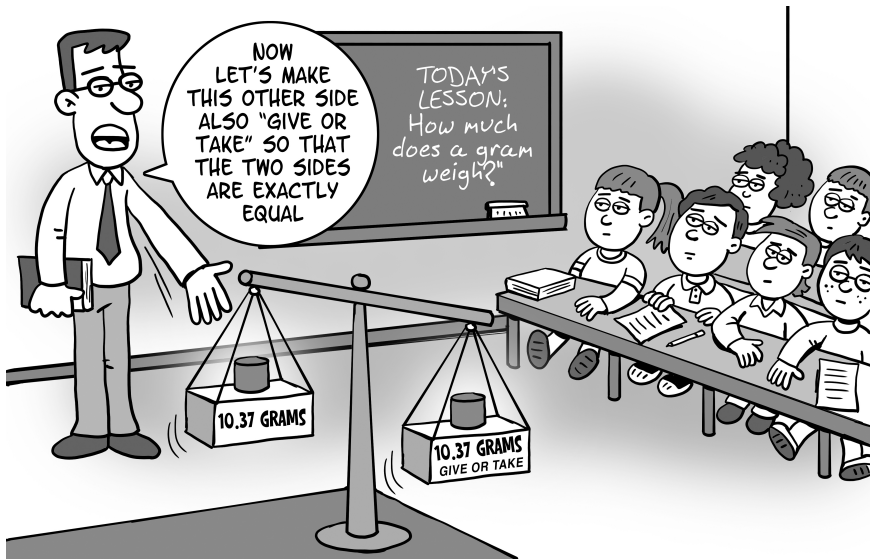


XI. ADDED REDUNDANCY

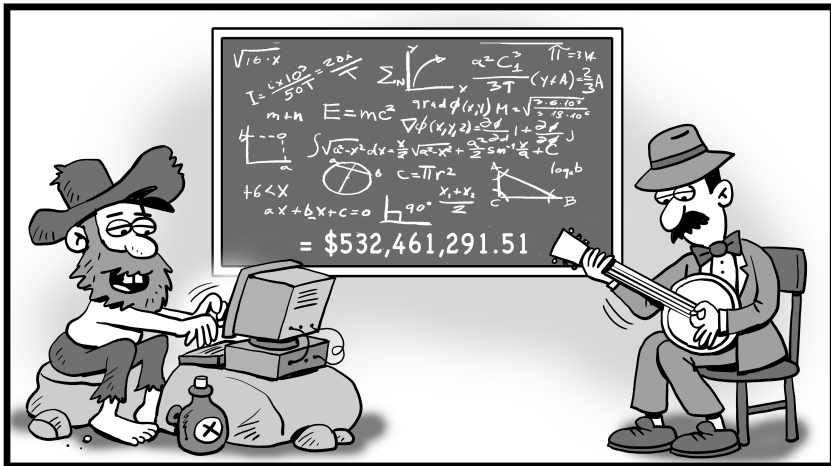
93. ~~Equal to one another~~ (even when the two things are not each equal to themselves)



94. ~~Exactly~~ equal (the technical term for two quantities that are approximately unequal)



99. ~~Polar~~ opposites (the polar opposite of the exact same)



The Culture War ended when Joe Bob and Prof. McClue discovered the secret of perpetual motion using only a banjo.

100. **Added bonus** (the bonus that remains after you give back the subtracted bonus)

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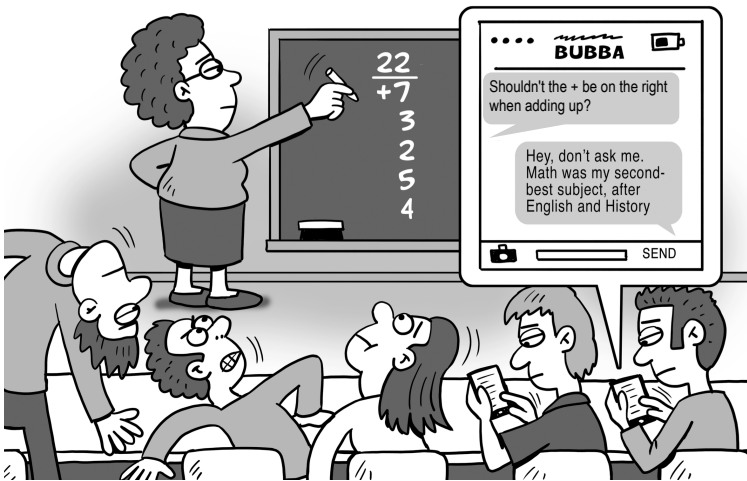
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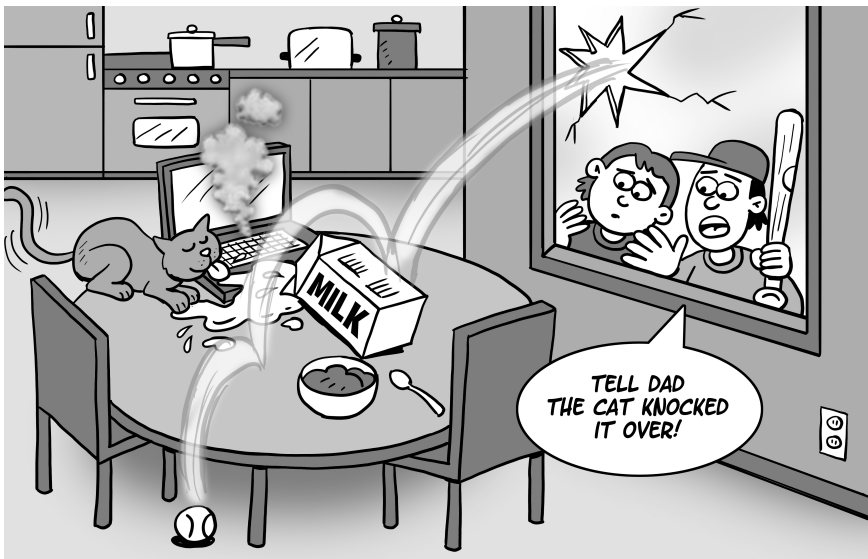
See also:

101. **Add an additional** (which comes after dividing by zero in the order of operations)

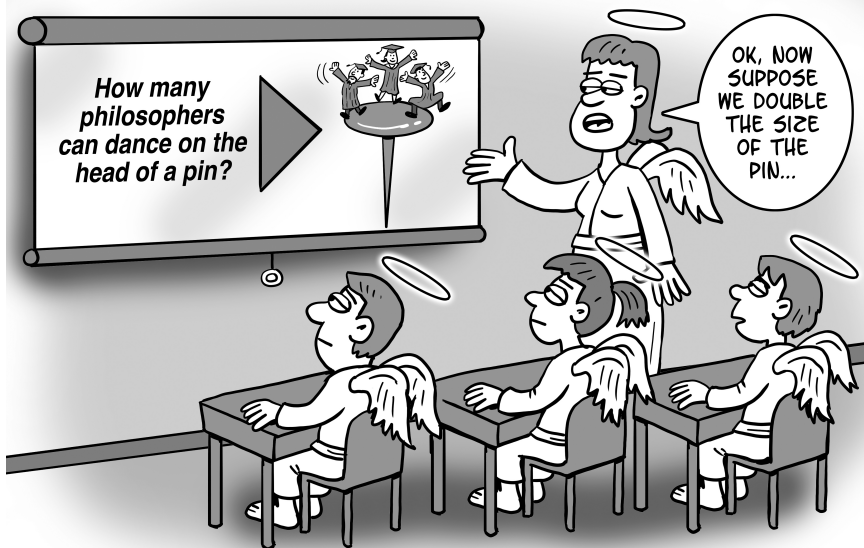
102. Adds up (which totals up to a higher sum than if you only add the numbers)



104. ~~Total~~ catastrophe (the sum of many partial catastrophes)



105. **Few in number** (much easier to count than that which is few but not in number, such as few in water)



106. **Over exaggeration** (unlike under exaggerations, which are totally and completely understated)



107. **True fact** (a fact that is actually true, even though it is only a fact)



110. **Random chance** (the problem with randomness is that you can never be sure)

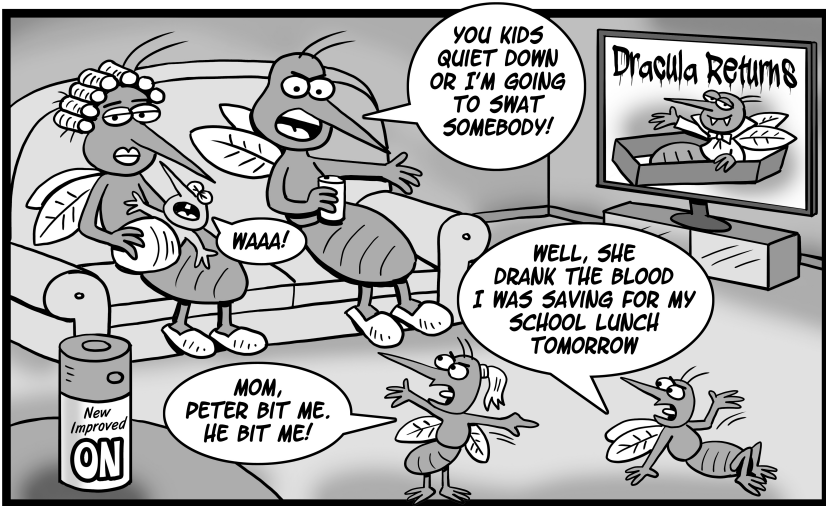


XII. SPARE REDUNDANCIES

112. **Corrupt politician** (unlike the honest politicians who lie about not being corrupt)



114. **Annoying** pests (which means it may be time to call the annoying exterminator)

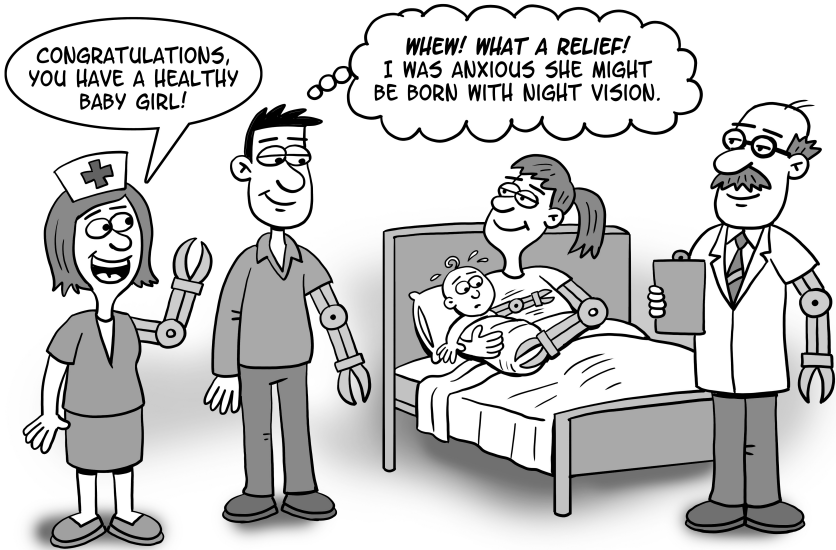


The Mosquito family having a blood sugar crisis just before sunset.

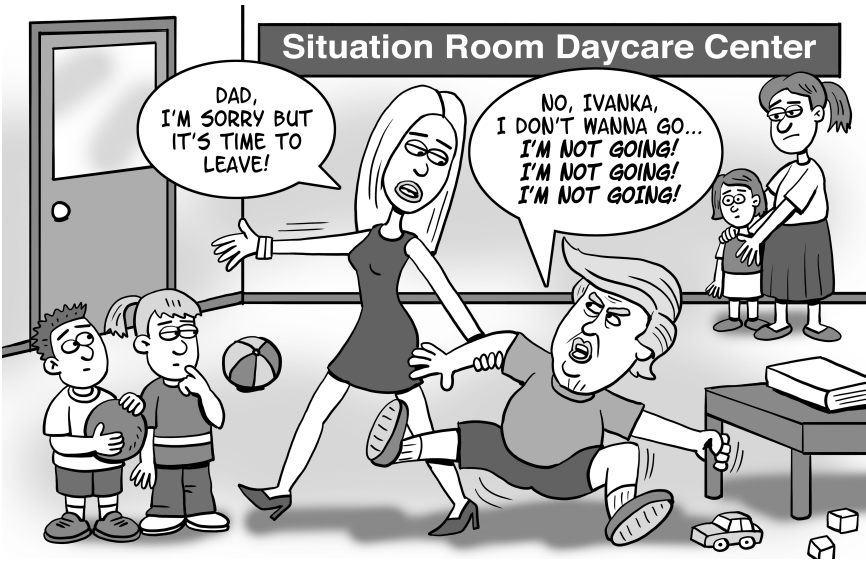
115. **Closed fist** (works better for playing “pick a hand” than for swatting annoying pests)



118. **Artificial prosthesis** (unlike a natural prosthesis such as a robotic arm that you are born with)



123. **Temper tantrum** (the exact opposite of a tantrum in which you lose your calm)



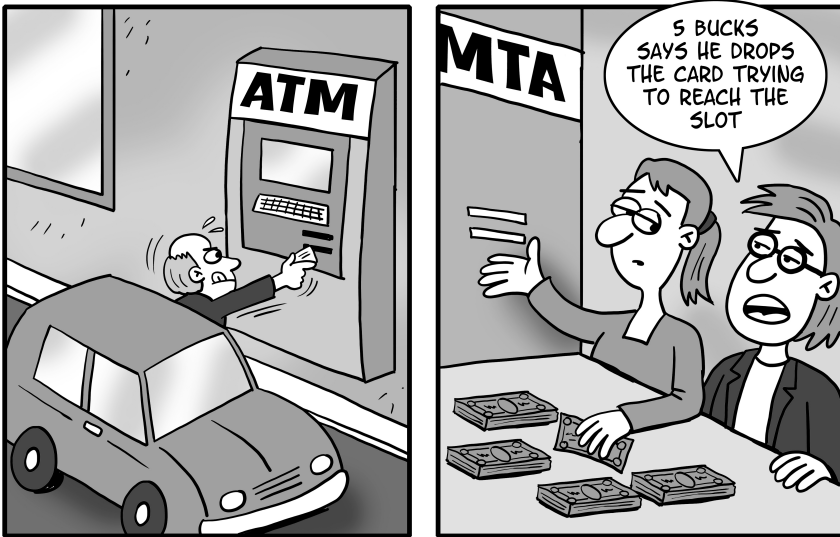
127. **Cognitive dementia** (not to be confused with physical dementia, characterized by a compulsive need to avoid unnecessary exercise)



128. **PIN number** (which can be any four digit number that has at least one Roman numeral, one emoticon, and is easy to remember)



130. **ATM machine** (unlike ATMs that are actually human bank tellers hiding on the other side of the wall)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Macy left his family's tobacco farm at age 17 for the inside-out world of Harvard Yard. Currently the Goldwin Smith Professor of Arts and Sciences at Cornell, his obsession with redundancies reflects a deeper fascination with language as a window into what people are thinking and feeling and how they interact. He commutes to Cornell from Canada where he cooks, skis, works on his latte art, debates his teenage daughter, and writes an occasional sonnet to his wife.

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