

JARGON

Definition of Jargon:

Jargon is a literary term that is defined as the use of specific phrases and words in a particular situation, profession, or trade. These specialized terms are used to convey hidden meanings accepted and understood in that field. Jargon examples are found in literary and non-literary pieces of writing.

The use of jargon becomes essential in prose or verse or some technical pieces of writing, when the writer intends to convey something only to the readers who are aware of these terms. Therefore, jargon was taken in early times as a trade language, or as a language of a specific profession, as it is somewhat unintelligible for other people who do not belong to that particular profession. In fact, specific terms were developed to meet the needs of the group of people working within the same field or occupation.

Jargon and Slang:

Jargon is sometimes wrongly confused with slang, and people often take it in the same sense but a difference is always there.

Slang is a type of informal category of language developed within a certain community, and consists of words or phrases whose literal meanings are different than the actual meanings. Hence, it is not understood by people outside of that community or circle. Slang is more common in spoken language than written.

Jargon, on the other hand, is broadly associated with a subject, occupation, or business that makes use of standard words or phrases, and frequently comprised of abbreviations, such as LOC (loss of consciousness), or TRO (temporary restraining order). However, unlike slang, its terms are developed and composed deliberately for the convenience of a specific profession, or section of society. We can see the difference in the two sentences given below.

- Did you hook up with him? (*Slang*)
- Getting on a soapbox (*Jargon*)

➤ **Examples of Jargon in Literature:**

Example #1: *Hamlet* (By William Shakespeare)

Historical Legal Jargon

HAMLET to HORATIO:

“Why, may not that be the skull of a **lawyer**? Where be his quiddities now, his quillities, his cases, his **tenures**, and his tricks? Why does he suffer this mad knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of **battery**? Hum! This fellow might be in’s time a great buyer of land, with his **statutes**, his **recognizances**, his fines, his double vouchers, his **recoveries**: is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very **conveyances** of his lands will scarcely lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?”

Here, you can see the use of words specifically related to the field of law, marked in bold. These are legal words used at the time of Shakespeare.

Example #2: *Patient Education: Nonallergic Rhinitis* (By Robert H Fletcher and Phillip L Lieberman)

Medical Jargon

“Certain medications can cause or worsen **nasal** symptoms (especially **congestion**). These include the following: birth control pills, some drugs for high blood pressure (e.g., **alpha blockers** and beta blockers), **antidepressants**, medications for **erectile dysfunction**, and some medications for **prostatic** enlargement. If **rhinitis** symptoms are bothersome and one of these medications is used, ask the prescriber if the medication could be aggravating the condition.”

This passage is full of medical jargon, such as those shown in bold. Perhaps only those in the medical community would fully understand all of these terms.

Example #3: *Marek v Lane* (By U.S. Supreme Court Ruling)

Modern Legal Jargon

“In August 2008, 19 individuals brought a putative **class action** lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California against Facebook and the companies that had participated in Beacon, **alleging** violations of various federal and state **privacy laws**. The **putative** class comprised only those individuals whose personal information had been obtained and disclosed by Beacon during the approximately one-month period in which the program’s default setting was opt out rather than opt in. The complaint sought **damages** and various forms of **equitable relief**, including an **injunction** barring the **defendants** from continuing the program.”

This ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court is full of modern legal jargon. The terms shown in bold are a good example of jargon that is not likely to be understood by the typical person.

Function of Jargon:

The use of jargon is significant in prose and verse. It seems unintelligible to the people who do not know the meanings of the specialized terms. Jargon in literature is used to emphasize a situation, or to refer to something exotic. In fact, the use of jargon in literature shows the dexterity of the writer, of having knowledge of other spheres. Writers use jargon to make a certain character seem real in fiction, as well as in plays and poetry.

Jargon Has Its Place in Business Communication:

✚ Jargon and Buzzwords Can Hinder Communication...

The media's excessive loathing of jargon and buzzwords is somewhat unjustified.

Yes, business communication is inundated with clichéd catchphrases with murky meanings that add no real linguistic efficiency. People tend to use such language merely to sound intelligent and important.

Why not? It's all part of "locker-room chat." It's only human nature to pattern our language (and behavior) to prove that we are "in the loop." If others are looking smart or fashionable from using specific slang and buzzwords, we will feel enticed enough to belong to that clique.

✚ ... But Jargon and Buzzwords May Be Very Helpful

Jargon and buzzwords may be annoyances, but crisp communication often needs the use of the appropriate vernacular. Every industry, profession, company, and team has a *lingua franca* that's full of well-recognized acronyms, phrases, and lingo for concepts and ideas. Ordinary words do not lend such efficiency.

When used properly, purposeful jargon can actually be an efficient way to talk about complex topics in a concise way—for example, phrases such as "mission-critical" and "key differentiators" may convey much significance when discussing the "strategic resource allocation."

✚ Idea for Impact: Don't Use Jargon and Buzzwords Just Because They're Trendy

Master the vernacular of the industry, company, and team you're working with. Limit jargon and avoid the overuse of buzzwords. Use them only when it is sensible and pragmatic—to facilitate concise and clear communication, not just to look "cool" or to "belong."

Remember, effective communication isn't about demonstrating your fancy vocabulary or rosy language. It's about communicating your message in the best way possible to the audience that you're targeting.

Examples of Jargon in the Workplace

There are many examples of jargon in the workplace. Whether it is the typical colloquial language that is heard in a café or the stuff that you might say or hear in a cubicle or around a water cooler in the office, workplace jargon is very common.

Workplace Jargon Examples:

Below are a few examples of popular buzz phrases that constitute many of the most-used phrases in workplace jargon:

- **Land and expand** - Workplace jargon meaning to sell a small solution to a client and then once the solution has been sold, to expand upon the same solution in the client's environment
- **Blue-sky thinking** - A visionary idea without always having a practical application
- **Think outside the box** - This term means to not limit your thinking; it encourages creativity with regards to your job description
- **The helicopter view** - An overview of a job or a project
- **Get our ducks in a row** - Order and organize everything efficiently and effectively
- **Drink our own champagne** - A term meaning that a business will use the same product that they sell to their customers. The champagne is an indicator a good product.
- **End-user perspective** - What the customer thinks about a product or service. It also is an indicator of a how a client would feel after having used the product or service.
- **Pushing the envelope** - This basically means to go outside of what is seen as normal corporate boundaries in order to attain a goal or secure a target
- **Moving forward** - Workplace jargon meaning getting things accomplished or making progress
- **Boil the ocean** - To attempt to do something that is impossible
- **Heavy lifting** - This refers to the most difficult aspects of a project, as in, "Bill is doing all the heavy lifting for us!"
- **Face time** - The time spent with a customer or client in person as opposed to on the phone or online

- **Hard copy** - A physical print-out of a document rather than an electronic copy
- **No call, no show** - An individual who neither shows up for the day nor calls in with a reason
- **Hammer it out** - To type something up
- **Cubicle farm** - A section of the office that contains worker's cubicles
- **Win-win situation** - A solution where all parties are satisfied with the results
- **Desk job** - Term for a job that is typically confined to duties from a desk, rather than one that requires standing or moving around
- **Kept in the loop** - This is a common phrase used to mean a person who is informed about what's going on with a project or plan
- **Pick the low hanging fruit** - Choose the simplest option or avenue to accomplish a task

When you hear these phrases in the corporate world, you'll know have a better understanding of what they mean. Remember, every business and every industry has its own jargon; so, you'll need to know not just general slang but also the industry specific jargon where you are employed.
