

Commonly Misused Business Words by Malaysians and Singaporeans

Inspired by Shirley, I've put together this collection of errors that are commonly seen and heard in South East Asia – particularly Malaysian and Singapore. I hope to update the list from time to time, so if you have any that you want to highlight, feel free to write to sue@itrainingexpert.com.

A	A lot	I've seen people write a lot as one word " alot " instead of two. If you do this, ask yourself if you would write <i>alittle</i> . Of course not, right? So don't write <i>a lot</i> simply because it is not correct. ! The same goes for in <i>spite of</i> and <i>in fact</i>
	Above-mentioned	This is a very old-fashioned phrase made up in the yesteryears to refer to whatever was in the subject heading or in the paragraph(s) above. This phrase should not be used in modern business writing. <i>Instead of</i> - Thank you for registering for the above-mentioned workshop. <i>Write/say</i> - Thank you for registering for this workshop. If whatever is above is plural, then use these instead of this. But never 'above', 'above-mentioned' or 'above-captioned' or even 'said'.
	Advice/ Advise	The words advice and advise are often mixed up, which is quite understandable since they have similar spellings and meanings. 'Advice' is a noun: you can give someone a 'piece of advice'. For example, let me give you some advice about travelling in Asia. 'Advise' is a verb: He advised me to always keep my passport on me when I was in Phillipines. His advice was very useful. The word advice is used far more often in everyday language than its counterpart. When you ask for someone's opinion, you're asking for advice. When you're giving someone a recommendation, you're still giving advice. Advice is a noun; advise is a verb. Besides, you certainly aren't advising! The word advise is used less often, but it still has its place, especially in the world of business. You might say, "Please advise me on how you would like to proceed" or "I would advise you to start saving your money." Example: She was asked to advise (verb) the government on immigration. Her advice (noun) was used to prepare the new programs.
	Affect/Effect	Affect is a verb meaning 'to influence', for example: The world economics will affect our business. How did the business writing workshop affect your work performance? Effect is a noun meaning 'result', for example: The bear market will have a n effect on our business this year. What effect will these changes have on your staff?
	Alphabet	Instead of saying There are 4 alphabets in my name – A-Z-I-Z, which is wrong, say There are 4 letters in his name - Aziz . There is only one alphabet in the English language - abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz - and there are 26 letters in the alphabet.
	Although	When you start a sentence with 'Although' you do not need the word 'but'. CORRECT: Although it is very late, I will still come over to see you. WRONG: Although it is very late, but I will still come over to see you.
	Anytime/Anytime/ Anymore/Any	Anytime is an adverb. Anymore is an adverb. Any time as two words are adjective and noun. Examples: You can discuss this with me anytime. Do you have time to discuss this with me? Don't do this anymore.
	As per	This is a simple cliché that is old-fashioned and overworked. We should not use ' per ' in our writing. <i>Instead of</i> As per your request ... say As you requested As per our agreement ... say As we agreed As per your instructions ... say As you instructed

		As per our telecon ... say As discussed
	Attached/enclosed herewith please find	<p>Why do you need herewith - if it's not herewith, where the heck is it? Get rid of it! Also get rid of Please find - it's passive and impersonal. Use the remaining words in any of these ways:</p> <p>I enclose / I attach I am enclosing / I am attaching I have enclosed / I have attached Enclosed is / Attached is</p> <p>NB: Use attach for e-mails. Use enclose for letters.</p>
	Back	<p>Do you use expressions like <i>return back</i> or <i>exchange back</i>? If so, you don't need the word back - it's completely redundant!</p>
	Bathe/Bath	<p>In England we often <i>have a bath</i> (in the bathtub) but in Malaysia/Singapore we mostly <i>take a shower</i> (standing up underneath a shower).</p> <p>I often hear mothers pestering her children by saying "Go and take your bath! Or Go and bathe. Really what they mean is take a shower.</p>
	Because, Although, Since, Unless, If, When	<p>When you start a sentence with any of these words, remember to attach an independent clause to it so that it becomes a complete sentence. We cannot have a sentence like "Because it is raining." This is a simple clause but it is not complete until you attach an independent clause to it.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> "Because it is late, I will leave for home now." The same goes for the other words mentioned in the heading.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> "Although it is late, I will still come over to see you." (Note that we don't need the word <i>but</i> when we use <i>although</i> - use a comma instead!)</p>
	Between or to	<p>Between must be followed by and. From must be followed by to.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> There were between 200 and 300 people at the concert. The seminar will be held from 0930 to 1730.</p>
	Bored/Boring	<p>I often hear people use boring instead of bored.</p> <p>In one of the recent workshop, a participant said, "I am very boring with my work, my routine work is so bored." He actually mean "I'm bored with my work and the routine work is so boring"</p> <p><i>More example:</i> My boyfriend is such a boring and dull person, so I am bored.</p>
	Bring and Fetch	<p>Use <i>bring</i> when the other person is at a different point to you and you want them to get you something.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> "Please bring me the document when you come over to my place later." "Fetch" means to go where something or somebody is and bring him/it back. But "pick someone up" means "to go somewhere in your car and collect somebody who is waiting for you" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary).</p> <p>So, "I will fetch you" is correct if you mean you are going from your house to where this person is and bringing him/her back to your house, for example, when you fetch your children from school. If you are driving from your house, it means "I will pick you up and bring you home."</p> <p>However, if you are giving a lift to a friend who is going to the same party as you are, you say: "I will pick you up at 8, all right?"</p>
C	Clarification	<p>I often see sentences like "Please contact me if you require any further clarifications." The word should be 'clarification'. Like the word 'information', it becomes countable when you are talking about specific pieces of clarification you need. In most cases you will mean the act of clarifying something, so use the word as an uncountable noun - clarification.</p> <p>NB: It would be much better to say, "Please give me a call at xxx if you have any questions."</p>
	Clichés	<p>Clichés (or platitudes) are things that have lost their sparkle, and often their meaning, through overuse. Examples of writing clichés are those old-fashioned terms like above-mentioned,</p>

		enclosed herewith, please be advised, I am writing to inform you.
	Clothing\	Another uncountable noun, this word does not need an 's' on the end. Even though you can count the number of pieces of clothing, you should still use the word clothing without the s.
	Compare to/ compare with	When comparing things that are dissimilar, use compare to. When comparing things that are similar, use compare with. <i>For example:</i> My life has been compared to a soap opera. US Congress may be compared with the British Parliament.
	consist of, include, comprise, be composed of, be made up of	include, consist of, comprise, be composed of, be made up of Use include to mention only some of the things that something has as its parts • The price includes lunch. If you want to mention all the parts that something has in it, use consist of, comprise, be composed of, or be made up of • The Romance family of languages consists of French, Spanish, Italian, and several other languages. • The house comprises two bedrooms, a kitchen and a living room. • The jury was composed of nine whites, one Hispanic, and two Asian Americans. • an organization made up of 600,000 small business owners Do not say that something 'is consisted of' certain things or that it 'consists' them. Say it consists of them. Do not say that something 'comprises of' certain things, even though you might hear English speakers say this. Most careful users consider this to be incorrect so you should avoid using it. Do not say that something 'is composed by' or 'is composed with' certain things. Say it is composed of Source: http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/comprise
	Contact on or Contact at	Both of these expressions are correct. British English: Contact me on +603 80945878 American English : Contact me at +603 809 8099.
D	Dated	When replying to a letter, do not say " Thank you for your letter dated on ". The correct expression is " Thank you for your letter dated ... " or " Thank you for your letter of ... ". We should not say dated on .
	Discuss	It is not grammatically correct to say " I want to discuss about ... ". The word discuss means " to talk about ", so if you say discuss about , you are really saying talk about about . Same when you use the word mention . Cut out the about! <i>For example:</i> Mary mentioned that her report was overdue. I want to discuss the agenda for next week's meeting. In the workshop we discussed the new rules for good writing.
	Due to the fact that	This is a wordy expression and can simply be replaced by As or Since or Because . Using Due To Due to means "caused by." It should be used only if it can be substituted with "caused by." It does not mean the same as "because of." Incorrect: The game was postponed due to rain. Correct: The game was postponed because of rain. Correct: The game's postponement was due to rain. The wordy expression due to the fact that should be replaced by because or since . Source: http://englishplus.com/grammar/00000208.htm
E	Enclosed herewith please find	The only word we really need in this cliché is Enclosed . It's so redundant to use herewith - if it's not herewith, where the heck is it? Please find implies it's like a game asking the reader to find something that's hidden. For modern business writing, we discard all the unnecessary wording to keep our written communication short and simple.
	Equipment	The word equipment is an uncountable noun and it should never end with an 's'. For example: We need some extra equipment for our new offices. All the new equipment has arrived. (use a

		<p>singular verb) This equipment - the LCD, OHP and DVD - is needed in the Training Room.</p> <p>Similar mistakes are made with words like luggage, baggage, furniture, information, clarification.</p>
	Everyday/ Every day	<p>Everyday is an adverb. Every day are adjective and noun.</p> <p>For example: Preparing minutes an everyday for a personal assistant. I pick up calls every day at work. Having to speak English every day is an everyday task at work.</p>
F	Fewer/Less	<p>Fewer relates to number. It's used for Countable nouns Less relates to quantity. It's used for Uncountable nouns For example: My father, Daniel, has much less hair than his brother. John spends less money money on his car than his friend, Joe. James gets fewer calls during Saturdays..</p>
	Fill up/ Fill In	<p>To fill up means filling up something that is empty with something else, like filling up a glass with water. If you are referring to a form, you fill in a form (British English) or fill out a form (American English).</p>
	Goodself	<p>This is so old-fashioned. Please do not use this word in your writing.</p>
	Grammar	<p>I see many people misspelt grammar as 'grammer'.</p> <p>No matter how many times you write it and pretend to pass it as correct, it is still WRONG! There is no such word as grammer - it's <i>grammar</i>, sounds like 'Grandma'.</p>
H	Hereby and Herewith	<p>These are old-fashioned clichés that we should not use in modern business writing. Outdated: I hereby attached the following receipt.</p> <p>Modern: Attached is the receipt.</p>
	However	<p>However - when the meaning is 'nevertheless' - can be used at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a sentence. It's a good word to help you illustrate a contrast in thought. Note that commas are usually needed.</p> <p>For example: <i>I rarely cook on weekends. However, last weekend was an exception.</i> <i>I rarely cook on weekends. Last weekend, however, was an exception.</i> <i>I rarely cook on weekends. Last weekend was an exception, however.</i></p> <p>When you use however to mean 'in whatever way' or 'to whatever extent', note that it is one word, not two: <i>However you pester her, she will made a decision until she is ready. .</i></p>
I	In order to	<p>This is an old-fashioned wordy phrase that can easily be shortened by removing the first two words. Just say 'To'</p>
	In the event that	<p>These four words can easily be reduced to one word - <i>If</i>.</p>
	In view of the fact that	<p>Six words that can easily be reduced to one - <i>As, Since or Because</i>.</p>
	Its/It's	<p>It's is written with an apostrophe only when it is a contraction for <i>It is</i>. For example: It's very funny when you see a kitten chasing its tail.</p>
	-ise or -ize	<p>Many words end in this suffix.</p> <p>-ise is British English -ize is American English</p> <p>Be consistent in your use of either -ise/ize. If you use '-ise' in letter, make sure you use '-ise' throughout. However, there are some words that must end in -ise whichever spelling convention you follow.</p> <p>For example: Arise comprise compromise disguise surprise supervise</p>
	irregardless	<p>An unnecessary mispronunciation of the word "regardless".</p> <p>Used by people who ignorantly mean to say regardless. According to Webster, it is a word, but since the prefix "ir" and the suffix "less" both mean "not or with" they cancel each other out, so what you end up with is regard. When you use this to try to say you don't care about something, you end up saying that you do.</p>
K	Kindly	<p>Prior to an inhouse training, I usually ask participants to send me a sample of their writing. To my surprise, I often see – '<i>Please kindly cooperate</i>' or '<i>Please kindly call me</i>' etc Do not use</p>

		<p>'Please' and 'Kindly' together because it is redundant. They should never be in the same sentence. <i>Kindly</i> is definitely a very old expression. As much as you wrong perceive that it makes you sound professional, it in fact makes you sound 'outdated' and 'old-fashioned' as if you are still stuck in the colonial times.</p> <p>Use Please instead.</p>
L	Luggage	<p><i>Luggage</i> is an uncountable noun. It should not be written as <i>luggages</i>. This word should be written with a singular verb.</p> <p>For example: I forgot my luggage in the car boot when I was rushing off to catch the plane. The same goes for <i>baggage, equipment, information, furniture, staff, personnel, advice, progress, accommodation, permission, inconvenience and feedback</i>.</p>
M	Marketing	<p>In standard English the word <i>marketing</i> is used to describe what companies do when they promote a product. It is not used to describe what we do when we go to the market or supermarket.</p> <p>For example: The ladies do their shopping in the nearby supermarket. My aunt went to the market to do some shopping. A lot of money is spent on marketing new products.</p>
	Mention	<p>Mention and mentioned are not followed by the word about (same as discuss and discussed). For example: The HR manager announced that following Tuesday is a public holiday.</p>
O	Outstation	<p>The word <i>outstation</i> seems to be used a lot in Southeast Asia. It dates back to colonial times when a person was not at his/her station. Unfortunately many people in the rest of the world would not understand this.</p> <p>Instead say: <i>not in the office, out of the office, out of town, went overseas</i></p>
	Pass up	<p>When you <i>pass</i> something, you move it from one person to another. You do not <i>pass up</i> your homework - you <i>pass in</i> your homework. <i>Pass up</i> is used when talking about chances or offers to do something. When you <i>pass</i> something <i>up</i> you are giving something amiss.</p>
	Practice/practise	<p>British English makes the distinction that practice is a noun and practise is a verb. All you have to figure out is whether your word is a noun or a verb - but sometimes it's not that easy! I think the Americans have it right - they use practice whether it's a noun or a verb. Imagine how much easier that would be!</p> <p>Anyway, using British English, here are some examples:</p> <p>For example: I need to practise the piano this weekend for a test next week. If I practise hard I should do well in my exams.</p> <p>The practice of kungfu is very good for developing concentration. It is not company practice to allow staff to take leave in December.</p>
	Reiterate or repeat	<p><i>Reiterate</i> is a more formal way of saying <i>repeat</i>. To <i>repeat</i> is to do something again, so neither of these words should be followed by the word <i>again</i></p>
	Request	<p>You do not request for something. <i>Request means to ask for</i>. So if you say, for example, "<i>I want to request for new stationery</i>" you are really saying "<i>I want to ask for for new stationery</i>". Cut out the extra word.</p>
	Return	<p>Many people use the phrase return back. This is not correct.</p> <p>CORRECT: We return faulty goods. CORRECT: We return to our favourite island resort. WRONG: We return the faulty goods. WRONG: We return back to our favourite island resort.</p> <p>We do not need the word back.</p>
	Revert	<p>Many people are using sentences like "<i>Please revert to me on this matter soon</i>". The word <i>revert</i> means to regress or go back to a former condition.</p> <p>The most common meaning of "revert" is "to return to an earlier condition, time, or subject."</p>

		<p>"Revert" is used in the wrong sense, as it often is in Malaysian official correspondence. "To revert" means "to return to a former state, or to return to an earlier topic (e.g. of conversation)".</p> <p>"When Dr. Jekyll drank the potion he reverted to the brutish behavior of Mr. Hyde. But in South Asia it has become common to use "revert" instead of "reply," writing when people want you to get back to them about something: "revert to me at this address."</p> <p>In standard English this would literally mean they are asking you to become them, so it is best to stick with "reply" when dealing with non-South Asian correspondents. Even some South Asians disapprove of this use of "revert."</p> <p>1) "To revert to what we were discussing before we were interrupted, why do you think Roger Federer is the greatest ever tennis player?"</p> <p>It would be wrong to use it in the following way:</p> <p>2) "The bank would <u>revert to</u> you with an explanation and/or decision soon."</p> <p>"Revert to" as used in sentence (1) means "go back to (a former subject of discourse) (OED) But unfortunately, in Malaysia, it is often used wrongly when someone wants to say "get back to/reply to (someone)".</p> <p>Instead of - Please revert to me soon on this matter. Say - I hope to hear from you soon.</p> <p>Please respond to me soonest possible.</p>
S	Stay & Live	<p>We use stay for short periods only.</p> <p>For example: I am staying at the Oberoi Hotel when I visit Mumbai. If you livesomewhere, that's the word you should use.</p> <p>For example: I am staying at the Westin Hotel when I visit Kuala Lumpur. I live in Mont Kiara, Kuala Lumpur.</p>
T	Thank you in advance	<p>A phrase like this, or <i>Thanking you in anticipation</i>, is unnecessary. They are from great grandfather's era. Don't thank readers before they have done something. Wait until they have done it, then say thank you.</p>
	The fact that	<p>We commonly hear or see <i>Due to the fact that</i>, <i>Despite the fact that</i>, <i>In spite of the fact that</i>, etc. These words are totally unnecessary and should not be used.</p>
	Time	<p>It is never <i>12 am</i> or <i>12 pm</i>. It is either <i>noon</i> or <i>midnight</i>. It's either <i>3 am</i> or it's <i>3 o'clock in the morning</i>. It is never <i>3 am in the morning</i>.</p>
	Undersigned	<p>Great grandfather used to refer to himself as a third person, ie "<i>Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned if you require any further information.</i>" Unfortunately, I still see people using this in their messages. What we should be writing is, "<i>Please call me at xxxx if you need any further information.</i>"</p>
	Use/Utilise	<p>Use is much better than <i>utilise</i>.</p> <p>For example: I used the dishwasher. John used the scissors to open the box. You should use a tissue to blow your nose.</p>
V	Voice - active and passive	<p>"Voice" refers to the relationship of a verb to its subject. <i>Active voice</i> means that the subject of the sentence does the action of the sentence. <i>Passive voice</i> means that the subject of the sentence receives the action. Using <i>active voice</i> can considerably improve your writing style. <i>Active voice</i> makes your writing more interesting, more lively, more vivid, and much more ... well, active!</p> <p>For example: Passive - The study was completed by the Marketing Director. Active - The Marketing Director completed the study.</p> <p>Passive - Separate requisitions should be prepared by each buyer. Active - Each buyer should prepare separate requisitions.</p>
W	While/Whilst	<p><i>Whilst</i> is an old-fashioned word. Use <i>while</i>.</p>