

Dear Abby

Good grammar is sweet music to any language-lover's ears

DEAR READERS: A while back, I wrote a column on the misuse of words and other irritants and named a few. I then asked readers to send their pet peeves concerning common mistakes in grammar and pronunciation. How's this for a collection?

The "lie" and "lay" confusion: To "lay" means to set or put; to "lie" means to recline. Remember, chickens lay eggs. People lie down.

The use of "all are not" when the person means "not all are." Example: Saying, "All women are not beautiful," when one means, "Not all women are beautiful."

We frequently hear "between you and I." Wrong! It's "between you and me." Another irritant is "try and" instead of "try to." For example, one

may try to win — then lose. But how can one try and win — and then lose?

One hears supposedly educated people say "between she and I" instead of the correct "between her and me."

And how about the word "irregardless"? Just plain "regardless" will do, but regardless of how "irregardless" grates on one's nerves, it has nosed its way into the dictionary. (It means "regardless.")

Talk about overusing a word, I nominate "basically." People who start every other sentence with the word "basically" usually have limited vocabularies.

My pet peeve — double negatives: "I don't know nothing" and "We don't go nowhere" are the worst offenders.

Some people think the plural of "you" is "youse." It's not. "You" is both singular and plural.

The word "forte" (meaning strong point) is pronounced "fort" — not for-tay.

Also, people use the word "snuck" instead of "sneaked." Although "snuck" somehow sneaked into the dictionary, it's not used by people who use proper English.

Ask someone to define "hoi polloi," and it's a good bet that he will say "high-tone or upper class." Actually, it means "the masses" — or the general population.

"Nuclear" is pronounced

"nuke-lee-er," not "nuke-you-ler"!

And how about "he's got," "she's got" and "they've got"? The better word is "has." ("He has," "she has," etc.) "Got" has got to go!

The month of February has two "R's" in it, but we keep hearing "Feb-yoo-ary."

We frequently hear that a man has "prostrate" trouble, when actually he has "prostate" trouble.

Another error — using the word "myself" instead of "me." Example: "If you have any questions, see Bobby or myself after the meeting." "See Bobby or me" is correct.

The "infer" and "imply" mix-up: The writer "implies"; the reader "infers." (It's like pitching and catching.)

Please do not say "o" instead of "zero." Or use the word "that" when "who" is correct. ("That" refers to inanimate objects, "who" to people.)

Now, lend me your ear: Don't use "loan" as a verb, as in, "Loan me a 20." It should be, "Lend me a 20." "Loan" is a noun; "lend" is a verb.

Finally, the misuse of the word "ask": Some say "ax" instead of "ask." I would much rather be "asked" than "axed." Wouldn't you?