

# SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT MENSA CHRONICLE

You should have received your **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL** form in early January. You can renew by mailing in your form, by renewing online at [www.us.mensa.org](http://www.us.mensa.org), or by calling (817) 607-0060, ext. 199 and using your MasterCard or Visa.

If you or someone you know would like to be a speaker at our monthly dinner, please contact Nancy O'Neil at [NancyOneil@aol.com](mailto:NancyOneil@aol.com). The dinner is held the third Saturday of the month at the Three Door Restaurant in Bridgeport.

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**SCHEDULE OF CHAPTER EVENTS FOR MARCH**

Wednesday, March 12, 7:00

**Southern Connecticut and Connecticut/Western Massachusetts Joint Dinner**

This regular dinner is now being held the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the Old Sorrento Restaurant, Newtown Road, DANBURY, CT Interested Mensans should contact Ward Mazzucco at (203) 744-1929, ext 25, wjm@danburylaw.com, or Rev Bill Loring at (203) 794-1389, frbill@mags.net.

Saturday, March 15, 7:00

**Monthly dinner, Three Door Restaurant**

1775 Madison Ave., BRIDGEPORT

**Handwriting Analysis and How it Reveals Your Personality**

- John Birznieks can determine 51 different personalities through handwriting. He has been analyzing handwriting for 30 years - for hiring, at parties, and helping people understand themselves. The U.S. Military Attache to Latvia, John is about to become the attache to Turkey. Come and here him speak before he goes! Socializing starts at 7:00, followed by dinner at approximately 8:00 Please contact Nancy O'Neil at nancyoneil@aol.com or 203-791-1668 for information and reservations Dinner includes everything but the cash bar Dress is casual and guests are welcome.

Saturday, March 29, 8:00

**THEATRE EVENT: Shakespeare's A Winter's Tale**

at the New Britain Repertory Theatre, 10 Harvard Street, New Britain, CT 06052. A kingdom is torn by conflict in the royal family. Princes, maidens, clowns, rogues, and even a wild beast or two explore a dreamlike landscape of love, madness, and finally, wisdom in Shakespeare's oft-neglected romance. Suggested donation is \$12.00 or more. For info or reservations, please call Jim Mizera at (203) 522-1959 or e-mail: Jmizera@hotmail.com.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR APRIL**

Wednesday, April 9, 7:00

**Southern Connecticut and Connecticut/Western Massachusetts Joint Dinner**

See above listing for details.

Saturday, April 19, 7:00

**Monthly Dinner, Three Door Restaurant**

1775 Madison Ave., BRIDGEPORT

Saturday, April 26, 8:00

**THEATRE EVENT: The Final Twist**

at the Clockwork Repertory Theatre, 133 Main St., Oakville, CT 06779. A fast-paced thriller that packs intrigue and humor into an ingenious plot. An author is hired to write a script for murder but the victim seems all too real. Tickets are \$14. For info or reservations, please call Jim Mizera at (203) 522-1959 or e-mail Jmizera@hotmail.com. Try to reserve tickets before Monday, April 21 to assure seats.

**CONNECTICUT AND WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS MENSA CHAPTER UPCOMING EVENTS**

This is not a complete listing WE - Weekly Event, ME - Monthly Event, YE - Yearly Event

Side note - There is a Floating Jazz SIG that Janine Bujalski is developing If you'd like to be on her email list, please let her know at JanineB\_CPA@compuserve.com (that's Underscore\_CPA!) - Beth Collins, CT & W Mass Calendar Editor

**MARCH**

6, 13, 20, 27 Thursday 7:00 PM

**Scrabble (WE) at Emmanuel Synagogue**

160 Mohegan Drive, West Hartford Ellen Leonard, (860) 667-1966 (Please call first to make sure this is happening today).

7, Friday 5:30 - 7:00 PM

**Happy Hour (ME, first Friday) at the Ramada Inn, Meriden**

*Admitted in CT, NY & OR*

**Sharon Oberst DeFala, Esq.**  
GENERAL PRACTICE OF LAW

Law Offices  
**Gary Oberst**  
A Professional Corporation  
111 East Avenue  
Norwalk, CT 06851

Office (203) 866-4646  
Home (203) 852-9571  
Fax (203) 852-1574  
sharon@oberstlaw.com

Ann Polanski, (203) 269-4565 This monthly reunion usually draws 10-20 people, Nov 2 we had 30! We warmly welcome newcomers, and it's less than a mile from the I-91 and I-691 interchange.

**DIRECTIONS:** From I-91 north or south, or Route 15 north or south, take East Main St (Meriden) exit, head east (away from Meriden Center) After the I-91 interchanges, take a right at the next light There is a small Ramada sign at the corner After you pass the Meriden Cinema Complex and the road curves to the left, take a right into the Ramada parking lot Inside Silver City Grill, ask the host/hostess for the Mensa table - they know us well!

15, Saturday 7:30

### **Ides of March / Paddy's Day Party**

at the home of Arturius O'Swanson of Ellington, County Tolland. Come celebrate the occasion of this con-joined celebration - since St. Patrick was a Roman citizen it is only appropriate. If you want to wear a toga make sure you look good in it. BYOB and something edible to share. But mostly bring yourself. For further information and directions call Art at 860-872-9308 or e-mail at Aswanson34@AOL.COM

21 Friday 6:00 - 8:00 PM or so

### **Diner Dinner**

(ME) Third Friday of the month, at Olympia Diner, Rte 5, Newington, just north of the Berlin town line and North East Utilities Meet at 6 PM or thereabouts Diner Dinner ranges from toasted cheese sandwich to steak and fish dinners Basic bar menu available, no happy hour prices, but the food is good and very reasonable Please contact Nicole Michaud at (860) 434- 7329 or email nirimi@snet.net, subject "diner dinner."

23 Sunday 12:30 PM

### **Fourth Sunday Lunch (ME)**

Join tri-state Mensans (from MA, VT, and NH) for a good lunch and better conversation at The Marina Restaurant in Brattleboro. Afterward we can make the scene in town if something looks interesting. RSVP to Margaret.M.Brodhead @hitchcock.org or 603-242- 3367.

**DIRECTIONS:** Marina Restaurant, Putney Road (U.S.5/S.R. 9), Brattleboro, VT. 802-257-7563. I- 91 to Exit 3, Routes 9/5 south to restaurant on the right. If you come in and don't see us, ask for Meg.



28 Friday 5:00 PM

### **Fourth Friday Happy Hour, (ME, fourth Friday)**

Colonial Tymes, 2389 Dixwell Ave Hamden Located about 1/2 mile north of Exit 60, Wilbur Cross Parkway We have been able to sit at a nice big table and enjoy the good free food for a few months now Come on down and join us We also seem to be going out to dinner after, so if you plan to come and want dinner, too, let us know so we can reserve Gail Trowbridge (203) 877-4472 or Gail.Trowbridge@att.com I send out an e- mail reminder every month Let me know if you'd like to be on the list.

### **MENSA REGIONAL GATHERINGS**

April 25 - 27, 2003

### **GREATER NEW YORK MENSA Presents "A NEW YORK STATE OF MIND."**

FOOD, GAMES, SPEAKERS, SOCIALIZING! FREE COCKTAIL HOUR, AND PROFESSIONAL COMEDY SHOW ON FRIDAY NIGHT! For superb N.Y. hotel rates, call the Staten Island Hotel by 3/31/03 at (718) 698-5000 and mention Mensa \$99 + tax single/double Friday, Saturday Hotel is convenient to downtown N.Y.C., L.I., N.J Turnpike, and Newark Airport Directions will be sent with registration confirmation (Registration form is on the next page.)

July 2 - 6, 2003

**MINNESOTA MENSA and MENSA CANADA present LIGHT UP THE NORTH.**

2003 Annual Gathering - St. Paul, Minnesota. Register online at [www.ag2003.com](http://www.ag2003.com).

The AG will have a full slate of speakers and activities to keep you occupied for the entire five days, along with nonpareil hospitality.

REGISTRATION: \$60 until 12/31/02, \$70.00 until 3/31/03. 1/2 price for ages 6-12, free for 5 and under. HOTEL: Radisson Hotel Riverfront, located on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi in downtown St. Paul. 1-800-333-3333

\$84.00/night (+tax), S/D/T/Q Meal Package: \$59.00 includes Friday Awards Luncheon, Saturday Night Banquet, Sunday Brunch. Special Added Attraction: Friday July 4th Riverboat Dinner Cruise on the Mississippi (\$35.00).

REGISTRAR: Jane Gmur E-mail: [registrar@ag2003.com](mailto:registrar@ag2003.com) Make checks payable to: 2003 Mensa Annual Gathering Mail to:

P.O. Box 2087, Minneapolis, MN 554002-0087

**REGISTRATION FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Badge \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Per Person Registration Rates:**

Until 11/30/02: \$40 \_\_\_\_\_

Until 1/31/03: \$50 \_\_\_\_\_

Until 3/31/03: \$55 \_\_\_\_\_

After 3/31/03: \$60 \_\_\_\_\_

Sumptuous Saturday Buffet \_\_\_\_\_

Dinner \$36 \_\_\_\_\_

Splendid Sunday Brunch \$17 \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

I want to participate in:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Helping in Hospitality
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helping at Registration
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helping to Introduce Speakers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Presenting a Program

Please return this form and your check or money order - payable to GNYM RG 2003 to: Karen Coopersmith-Tobin, Registrar 20 Wisteria Court Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852

QUESTIONS? Call Karen Coopersmith-Tobin at (732) 438-0067 or Brenda Giammanco at (718) 980-1686 [IlanasMom@aol.com](mailto:IlanasMom@aol.com) [paleneka@juno.com](mailto:paleneka@juno.com)

July 2 - 6, 2003

**2003 ANNUAL GATHERING MINNESOTA MENSA and MENSA CANADA present LIGHT UP THE NORTH** St Paul, Minnesota. Register online at [www.ag2003.com](http://www.ag2003.com).

The AG will have a full slate of speakers and activities to keep you occupied for the entire five days, along with nonpareil hospitality

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**NOTED AND QUOTED**

The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires. - *William Arthur Ward*

The way to get rid of corruption in high places is to get rid of high places. - *Frank Chodorov*

When you reach the mountaintop, you're only halfway. - *Mountain Climber's Proverb*

History is only a confused heap of facts. - *Lord Chesterfield*

Life is simple, it's just not easy. - *Author Unknown*

Time is the school in which we learn, time is the fire in which we burn. - *Delmore Schwartz*

Not doing more than the average is what keeps the average down. - *William M. Winans*

Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons. - *Popular Mechanics, 1949*

I have not yet begun to procrastinate. - *Anonymous*

On the edge of destiny, you must test your strength. - *Billy Bishop*

Magnetism, as you recall from physics class, is a powerful force that causes certain items to be attracted to refrigerators. - *Dave Barry*

"My country, right or wrong," is a thing that no patriot would think of saying except in a desperate case. It is like saying, "My mother, drunk or sober." - *Gilbert K. Chesterton, English essayist, novelist, journalist and poet (1874 - 1936)*

There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all. - *Peter Drucker*

If every fool wore a crown, we should all be kings. - *Welsh Proverb*

While we are free to choose our actions, we are not free to choose the consequences of our actions. - *Stephen Covey*

A sobering thought: What if, right at this very moment, I am living up to my full potential? - *Jane Wagner*

Life is a journey, not a guided tour - *Unknown*

What the crowd requires is mediocrity of the highest order. - *Auguste Preault*

#### NEW MEMBERS THIS MONTH:

Welcome to these new or returning Southern CT Mensa members:  
Douglas Edwards, Carl Lupinacci,  
David F Wittenberg, Rex L Niswander,  
Maxwell Cousins, Robert S Schultz,  
and Kunal Patel.

If you wish to submit material, please write or e-mail Jim Mizera at PMB #181, 7365 Main St., Stratford, CT 06614-1300, Jmizera@hotmail.com E-mail submissions are preferred Please include your name, address, and telephone number Anonymous material will be rejected, although names will be withheld on request Items will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope Currently, the deadline for postal submissions is the 15th of the month preceding publication, and the 20th of the month for e-mail submissions.

## PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

Regional Vice-Chairman Betsy Burke

I just returned from a rather stormy AMC finance committee meeting, which was held at the National Office in Texas. The meeting itself was not tempestuous; in fact, I'm amazed at what is accomplished at a discussion that lasts all day Saturday and goes on until Sunday afternoon. Getting down to the meeting and returning was the stormy part. I left my home on Friday morning during a snowstorm. The plane was sort of on time and I actually made it with 15 minutes to spare. The return trip was also into a snowstorm. Guess you could say this meeting snowed me under. I'm not on this committee but I find it advantageous to attend. I've certainly learned a lot about AML finances.

Your input is really needed on two items that came up for discussion. One of course was MONEY - actually, dues. There will be no increase this year but we will have one in the near future. I'd like some feedback on whether you would prefer to have a large increase at one time or a small yearly increase. By large I'm talking five to ten dollars; small would mean one or two dollars per year. Please, these numbers are only meant as examples so let's not panic. Hint: for those of us who like sales, this might be the time to invest in a three or five year dues payment plan. That would save you money in the future.

Another topic that needs some discussion is the Bulletin. Should Mensa be actively seeking more advertisements? This would certainly add some income but it would change the magazine significantly. What's your opinion on this? Would you like more color, more letters, fewer letters, more regular articles or what? Please let me know. In order to truly express your views I have to know what they are!

Speaking of finances... Remember April 15th. If you need to de-stress and relax after doing your income tax, consider attending Great New York Mensa's A New York State of Mind being held from April 25- 27 at the State Island Hotel. (718-698-5000) Room rates are only \$99, which is a bargain in New York City. Registration is \$55 until the end of this month. Contact Karen Coopersmith-Tobin, 20 Wisteria Court, Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852; 732/438-0067

## THE FEBRUARY DINNER

**PAUL LEVINE - CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

Paul Levine faces crises everyday. But unlike most people, he wouldn't have it any other way - he does it for a living as a corporate turnaround specialist. At the February dinner, Paul gave an informal presentation on "Crisis Management for Businesses," giving the audience an inside look at what he does to save companies from bankruptcy.

As Paul related, he has had a long and varied career - actually, 23 different careers as he figures it. He started out at a Fortune 500 company and did a successful turnaround at one of the company's failing subsidiaries. After working as a manager in the corporate world for several years, he decided to strike out on his own and buy some companies. Here Paul experienced failure first hand. He didn't let it stop him, however; he simply came back and bought some more companies and this time succeeded. Ever since then, Paul has learned from failure and helped other companies overcome their mistakes.

The companies Paul has worked with have been mostly private machine and manufacturing companies. These companies, unlike bigger companies, cannot bury their mistakes. Small companies simply can't afford the mistakes that Fortune 500 companies might shrug off. If they do start faltering, they need a plan to stop crisis from turning into disaster. Paul advises companies to follow these seven guidelines:

1. Don't try to go it alone. Even if you have extensive business experience, you probably don't have experience rescuing a company on the brink. You will need all your energy to keep the company running; get some advice and help on dealing with creditors.

2. Don't forget that cash is king. Creditors are usually relieved to learn that companies in financial trouble have a plan to pay on a cash basis.
3. Consider changing the product mix. What worked well in the past may be obsolete.
4. Look at the current organizational structure. The management in place may be a holdover from a different era, unprepared to meet the new problems.
5. Pay for performance. Change compensation so that it is tied to improved performance. This will give managers and workers an incentive to stay on during hard times.
6. Don't rule out price increases. Managers often fear to do this because they believe they can't afford to lose any more business. But even if companies can't raise prices across the board, they often can increase prices for several products and this will help the balance sheet.
7. Make exit plans. If the company can't turn around, it may still be able to make the best of the situation by selling itself in stages, abandoning some properties and control in an orderly way.

Paul emphasized that in crises, "Experience is often the worst teacher." Many businesses simply continue what has been successful in the past, regardless of changing markets. Owners who have built a company from scratch may not have experienced failure before and so they may stick with familiar methods long after they have outlived their usefulness. They rely on past experience instead of anticipating the future.

Business owners sometimes even stick with unsuccessful products because they believe that

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**CRISIS MANAGEMENT - CONT.**

they have invested too much effort in them to abandon them. But continuing an unsuccessful product in good times is harmful; it simply wastes money, money that may be crucial during bad times. Sunk costs are sunk costs; they cannot be recovered by pouring more money down the drain. Managers ignore this at their peril.

Paul repeatedly emphasized that the corporate turnaround business is a very personal business. He had to be a good judge of the people he was dealing with as well as their businesses. His most difficult cases were caused by personality problems. Owners who have always controlled a company sometimes are reluctant to seek help or accept advice. Paul tries to accept cases only where the owner's ego will not get in the way. But sometimes he misjudges people based on initial meetings. This happened in Paul's most difficult case. After meeting with the owner of a company that was in dire trouble, Paul told him that he had to be given complete control in order to save the company. After two months of Paul's help, the company was doing better. But the domineering owner cut the contract short and asked Paul to leave. The company eventually failed because the owner didn't have the skills to guide the company through troubled waters and couldn't relinquish any control to someone who did.

Paul Levine's wisdom has benefited many companies, and not surprisingly several have retained him as an advisor after a crisis has passed. For these companies, he serves as a sounding board for executives who need to talk out their decisions. Practicing what he preaches, he usually ties a good part of his pay to improved profits and performance.

Listeners had many questions for Paul and welcomed his answers and insights. He has found opportunity in crises and Mensans were intrigued by what he has learned from it.

\*\*\* Paul Levine runs Paul M. Levine & Associates, Inc., Ridgefield, CT.

**NEXT MONTH'S DINNER:** John Birznieks speaks on Handwriting Analysis. Socializing starts at 7:00, followed by dinner at approximately 8:00.

**GOOD WINE CHEAP  
(AND GOOD FOOD TO GO WITH IT)**

*By John Grover*

This month's wine comes from South Africa. The early French, Dutch and German settlers brought several European grape varieties with them to Africa. Of course, they immediately started making wine. With the end of apartheid, numerous excellent South African wines are being exported to the USA.

This red wine is a 1998 blend of Cinsault and Pinotage grapes produced by the Voorspoed Winery, located in the Coastal Wine Region. The Cinsault gives it a light body but an earthy yet floral flavor similar to many reds found in the South of France. The Pinotage, a hybrid of European varieties, provides a subtle fruit that completes this pleasant blend. It is a good match for pork or chicken dishes with lighter sauces such as the recipe below. You should be able to get this wine for \$7 to \$9 a bottle.

**CHICKEN BONAPARTE**

Ingredients: 2 boneless and skinless chicken breasts; 2 tsp. fresh chopped garlic; 1/2 cup fresh sliced mushrooms; 1/4 cup diced leeks (onions can substitute); 6 pieces of sun-dried tomatoes (sliced in strips); 1/2 cup chicken stock; 1/4 cup dry white wine; 1 tsp. chopped fresh parsley; 1 tbs. Chopped basil; 1/2 tsp. sugar; 1/2 cup chopped tomatoes 1/4 cup olive oil; 1/2 pound angel hair pasta; seasoned flour (salt and fresh ground pepper).

Lightly pound the chicken breast and dredge in the seasoned flour. Heat 1/4 cup olive oil in a sauté pan and place in chicken, sautéing until light brown on both sides. Slightly degrease pan if you have excess oil, then add garlic, mushrooms, leeks and sun-dried tomatoes. Sauté for a minute or two then deglaze with wine and chicken stock. Finish with herbs, tomatoes and sugar. Cook on low heat for five to ten minutes more. Serve with the pasta. This recipe amply serves two and should take about 20 minutes to prepare. If you cannot find the wine above, a good Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio should also go well.

John Grover is a member of Mensa of Northeastern New York. He lives with his wife Sharon in the Hudson Valley in Kinderhook, New York.

## PUZZLES & QUESTIONS

1. What do you think are the main reasons that people mismanage money?
2. What awards do you think should be eliminated?
3. What will be the greatest invention of the 21st century?
4. An investor's portfolio gains 50% and falls by one-third the next year. What is the net change in the value of his portfolio?

### ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S PUZZLES:

2. A painting contractor contracts to paint 3 houses. Mr. Veryfast can paint a house in 6 days. Mr. Fast can paint a house in 8 days. Mr. Slow can paint a house in 12 days. Mr. Veryfast starts off painting by himself and works 8 days before going on vacation. Mr. Fast takes over and works for 6 days before leaving. Mr. Slow replaces him. How many more days does it take Mr. Slow to finish the job? How long would it have taken the painters to do the job if they all worked together?

A: Mr. Veryfast paints houses at the rate of  $1/6$  per day and works for 8 days. Mr. Fast paints  $1/8$  house per day and works for 6 days. Mr. Slow paints  $1/12$  of a house per day but we don't know how long it took him to finish up. We can set up an equation that will describe the situation:

$$[(1/6) \times 8] + [(1/8) \times 6] + (1/12)X = 3 \quad \text{where } X \text{ is the \# of days Mr. Slow works.}$$

$$4/3 + 3/4 + (1/12)X = 3$$

$$25/12 + (1/12)X = 3$$

$$(1/12)X = (36/12) - (25/12)$$

$$(1/12)X = 11/12$$

$$X = 11 \text{ more days}$$

If all three men worked together from start to finish, the equation would be:

$$[(1/6) + (1/8) + (1/12)] X = 3$$

where X = the total # of days

$$[4/24 + 3/24 + 2/24] X = 3$$

$$(9/24)X = 3$$

$$X = 3 \times (24/9) = 8 \text{ days (when they all work together)}$$

## NEW FROM WING AND A PRAYER PRESS

Southern Connecticut Mensa member Jerry Brooker has recently had his new book of poems called "A Quiet Conversation," published by Wing and a Prayer Press.

Faith Vicinanza, publisher Hanover Press, 2002  
"He uses everything: humor, politics, love, history ... to render a poetic adventure that is playful, erotic, and gentle."

Sandra Bishop Ebner, author of The Space Between "The poet's intimate conversations with the self with an originality of language that deserves notice."

Erik Zork Alan, author Stolen Snapshots "He paints lush, linguistic landscapes and makes me marvel at life's mysteries. He understands the sinner and the saint."

The book can be purchased (\$10) on the Internet at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) Advantage (Literature and Fiction/Poetry/Gerard Brooker).

About the Author Mr. Brooker has had over 250 poems and articles published, most of them about inequities on this earth. He has lived and traveled widely and has been recognized for his humanitarian work, most recently with two honorary degrees, and was inducted into the National Teachers' Hall of Fame in 1998.

### HAIKU CORNER

Goo on my left shoe  
Two slugs in pachysandra.  
Thick gray drool oozing.

I am the good God.  
In a winter storm at sea  
you will not find me.

Pearl of mother's love,  
the gift of its protection  
touching the other.

## FIGHTING JARGON AND VERBAL INFLATION

"The parameter package might be service-specific access instructions."

"Teaching 'at a distance', using a correspondence system, would offer considerable advantages, especially in terms of cost, yet there were a number of difficulties in implementing a scheme on the scale intended."

"A sense of urgency pervades the customer-driven organization. The partners reported that there was an organizational vigor which accompanied their move to more aggressively adopt a customer focus."

"The fast development of technology in all business fields, and the information technology in particular, has augmented the sophistication in customer needs, hence the survival of business as well as the lifetime coveted business leadership is under threat."

"This component of the study involved a critical appraisal of the literature with respect to the relationship between health human resource modalities (i.e., major dimensions) and desired outcomes of community-based health services delivery."

If you had trouble slogging through these sentences, you are not alone. These samples aren't so much sentences as linguistic nightmares, things English classes should have taught everyone to avoid. Yet this type of writing and speaking not only persists, it seems to be getting more common. In education, business, technology, medicine, and ordinary conversation, the verbal inflation index seems to be at an all-time high. What can you do to stop this avalanche of pretentious prose? You can start by following the simple guidelines listed below.

1. Don't make nouns or adjectives into verbs by adding the -ize ending. Examples: incentivize, prioritize, actualize

Ken Smith, author of the new book *Junk English*, defines "-ize" as "a drug consumed in large quantities by business and technical speakers and writers. It turns ordinary people

into official-sounding authorities and lets them talk for hours without saying anything." Smith criticizes some "-ize" words that have become standard English such as "militarize", "computerize", and "standardize". Regardless of whether you agree with him on these words, get rid of the more awkward "-ize" words: actualize, verbalize, finalize, prioritize, utilize, containerize, operationalize, parameterize. There are simpler words that can easily replace them. Instead of incentivizing people, why not just encourage them? Don't finalize things, finish them. Don't actualize something, do it or build it. Stop utilizing things; go back to simply using them.

2. Get rid of nouns used as verbs such as "input", "output", and "impact". These words don't have much impact.
3. Strike techno-jargon such as "proactive" and "interface" from your vocabulary. Strike anyone who uses them.

"Active" or "alert" can replace "proactive" most of the time. "Interface" should never have left the computer room. People shouldn't interface, they should meet. Drop buzzwords into the English language's wastebasket.

4. Don't attach the -wise ending to turn nouns into adjectives.  
Examples: How are you doing time-wise?  
We're doing OK weather-wise.  
He's not very good money-wise.

Why can't people just say that they are on time, that the weather is good, or that someone can't handle money? What's next? Thought-wise? Speed-wise?

5. Stop adding -driven, -centered, -based, -specific, -intensive, -oriented, -focused, and -enhanced to nouns to create adjectives.

These endings create long, clumsy, and vague adjectives. Let's banish "customer-driven" or "consumer-focused" companies and "capital-intensive" businesses. Stop talking about "child-centered" education. Quit telling us that you're "issue-oriented". Skip "vitamin-enhanced" foods.

## 6. Avoid "Issues"

A columnist recently wrote that a Little League player "was lacking time and had self-confidence issues". If the writer could say that the boy lacked time, why couldn't he say that he "lacked confidence" as well? Why make an "issue" out of it? Apparently, people don't disagree with things anymore; they have "issues." It's borderline psychobabble

## 7. Avoid vague words like environment, parameters, process, implement, formulate, function, resources, modalities, localities, situation, operational, facility, facilitate, organizational, and logistics.

When did hospitals and clinics become "medical facilities" and when did they start "facilitating recovery" instead of healing people? Why say "resources" when we mean money? What exactly do you do when you implement something?

## 8. Eliminate redundant words.

Ken McGinty, in his book the *Writer's Pocket Almanac* (Brockman & Horton, InfoBooks, 1988), gives some classic examples: serious trouble, resource values, subsequent efforts, change from the present, domestic livestock, maximum capacity, available supply, exact duplicate, secret cache, very unique.

Trimming most of these phrases cuts only one word, but phrases like these might be sprinkled throughout a paper.

## 9. Get rid of awkward, roundabout phrases.

T. M. Georges, author of *Analytical Writing for Science and Technology*, gives many examples that can be simplified:

a large/small number of - few  
 a sufficient quantity of - enough  
 along the lines of - like  
 at an early date - soon  
 at this point in time - now  
 be cognizant of - know,  
 realize due to the fact that - since  
 for the purpose of - so  
 has an ability to - can  
 in conjunction with - together  
 in order to - to

in spite of the fact that - despite  
 in such a manner - like as in the event that if  
 in the near future - soon  
 in this day and age - today  
 now increased by a factor of two - doubled  
 is capable of - can  
 leave out of consideration - ignore  
 most of the time - usually  
 of the order of magnitude of - of  
 rate of speed - speed  
 subsequent to - after

There are also many introductory phrases that should never be introduced: with respect to, in regard to, in consideration of, concerning, in terms of, in view of. These phrases aren't just fat, they're blubber. They can usually be cut because the subject of the sentence is already clear. If it isn't, the sentence can be rewritten to make it clear and short.

Following these guidelines will simplify your writing and speaking, save time for your audience, and make your message clearer. If you can, discourage people from talking like this. It will go a long way toward checking verbal inflation.

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**CHAPTER NOTES**

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**If you would like to organize or sponsor a Mensa event**, please contact Jim Mizera at Jmizera@hotmail.com The event can be posted in the Chronicle and announced at monthly dinners It can also be listed in the newsletter of the Connecticut and Western Massachusetts Mensa chapter, the Media, if enough lead-time is available.

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