

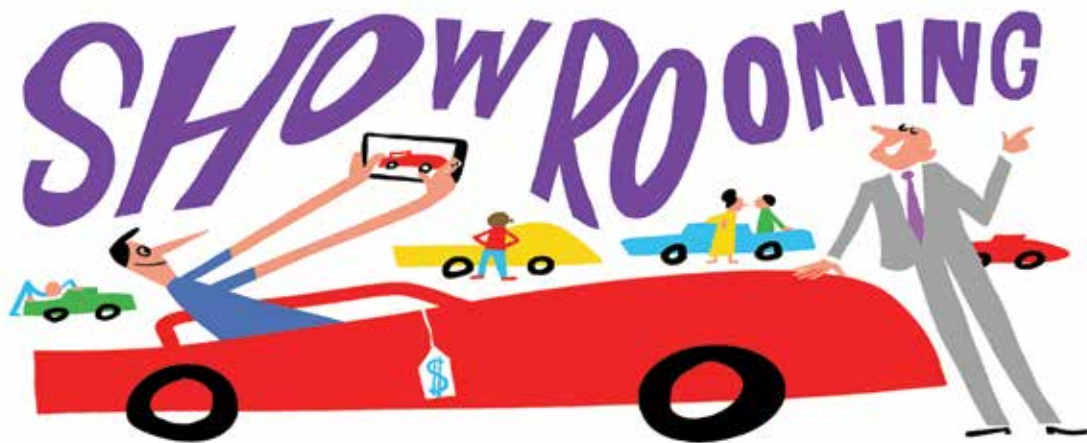
NEW THINK

THE **AMAZING!** IDEAS THAT SHAPE OUR WORLD • EDITED BY JASON CHEN

ON LANGUAGE

GLOSSARY

*Ammon Shea on the new buzzwords.
Illustrations by Bendik Kaltenborn*



Visiting a store to view merchandise with the intention of purchasing those goods online.

“Showrooming” combines the benefits of brick-and-mortar establishments, where one can actually see merchandise, with the advantages of purchasing online, where one can actually afford it. Recently, non-Internet retailers have made news by charging potential customers a fee (a specialty-foods store in Australia demanded \$5) if they come to the store to browse without buying, and Congress is deciding on a bill that would impose an online tax to prevent the practice.



To willfully insert information about one's children into a conversation when such details are not relevant.

This word draws its constituent parts from “mommy” and “hijack,” both of which are surprisingly recent additions to our language (the former first appears in the late 19th century, and the latter dates from 1923). “Jack” has been appended to other words, such as “car” and “sky,” so it seems possible that its affiliation with “mommy” will be a lasting one.



A prank in which 911 is called and told that a dire situation is occurring at the home of a famous person in the hopes that a SWAT team will arrive.

The telephone has proven to be a powerful vehicle for tricks, from the sublime (prankster Joybubbles mimicked computerized pitches to make free long-distance calls) to the banal (13-year-olds ordering pizza for their neighbors), but “swatting” takes the concept in a bold—and frightful—new direction with the addition of emergency-service personnel.



One who adheres to a largely vegetarian diet but does not completely eschew the practice of eating meat.

Among the seemingly innumerable “-arian” words relating to food we find such delicate shades of meaning as ovo-vegetarian (doesn't eat meat but eats eggs), pescatarian (eats fish) and pollotarian (eats poultry but not red meat). What flexitarians lack in adherence to a dietary structure they make up for in categorical pliancy; they eat almost everything in a healthful and reasonable fashion.



A visual representation of data (usually text-based) involving the arrangement of words of varying sizes in a nonlinear format.

“Word clouds” burst into prominence in the early 2000s, providing web designers a novel way to present information. The larger a word appears, the more times it has been tagged by users or entered as a search term—often with amusing results. How else to visualize the popularity of search terms like “Mad Men” and “Modern Love” on The New York Times website?