

In the *Ghostbusters* movies, the eponymous heroes blast ghosts and otherworldly beings with their proton packs, and the ghosts explode into a mess of slimy green ghost goo. This goo is called ectoplasm. I first encountered ectoplasm through Hi-C’s companion drink, Ecto Cooler, in elementary school whenever I brought my lunch. Ultimately, Ecto Cooler couldn’t hold a candle to the greatness of Kool-Aid Blasts and Capri Suns.

The late ’80s and early ‘90s were a wild time for brown-bagging it. Of course, my kids refer to anyone born before 2000 as people “born in the 1900s.”

On the theme of “words that end in ‘-asm,’” I’d like to discuss neoplasms. While “neoplasm” sounds like something that would ooze from goblins in the *Ghostbusters* reboot, it’s actually a language term referring to a fun, limited-edition flavor of redundancy.

Pleonasm is using more words than necessary to convey meaning, whether done intentionally (for emphasis) or unintentionally. More simply stated, pleonasm is when someone uses a redundant expression.

For instance, when playing *Goldeneye 007* on the Nintendo 64, my friend Brandon always yelled, “Kill him dead!” And then he’d either eat a handful of Gushers or Bugles. Remember, this was the late 1900s.

I think pleonasm is hilarious. For my day job, I write plenty of blog article titles and email subject headlines, so I chuckle anytime I see pleonasm in the wild.

The most common use of pleonasm I’ve observed is when a company offers a “free gift” to dangle a new subscription to a potential customer. While I get it, the definition of a gift is something that doesn’t cost the recipient anything. Noticing pleonasms is a gift and a curse.

Pleonasm works well to emphasize a sentence. For example, “I saw it with my own eyes,” or “heard it with my own ears” is something you’ll hear from eyewitnesses after a tornado, alien abduction or international weather balloon in the sky. “I saw the Canadian low orbit spy balloon” is much less emphatic than “I saw the Canadian low orbit spy balloon with my own eyes.” The latter sentence conveys more weight and importance.

While pleonasm adds intentional emphasis, it often shows up unintentionally. Examples include “true facts,” “new beginnings,” “past experience,” and “novel idea.”

Thanks for indulging my past memories of long ago. As an added bonus, these video games and movie franchises are returning, and now it’s déjà vu all over again.

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