

## Come sale away

Written by 'Grammar Guy' By Curtis Honeycutt Guest Columnist  
Friday, 21 July 2023 04:53

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I've never been fond of boats or horses. The reason I'm not a boat fan is because I'm a 38-year-old man who can't swim.

And I don't want to get into the horse thing right now. I'm still working through that with my counselor. Let's just say it happened back in 2009 on a rainy spring day in Arizona and I don't want to talk about it. The horse's name was Azul. I almost died. That's all you're getting out of me.

At some point during summertime childhood swimming lessons, I failed miserably and didn't receive my certificate to move to the next swim class. As a result, I dropped out. For a pasty redhead, I already didn't like being outside in the first place. Now I can barely doggie paddle my way out of a kiddie pool.

If I were to win a sailboat or modest yacht (hypothetically), I'd certainly sell it as quickly as possible. I'd put that sail up for sale. The difference between the words sail, sale, sell and cell are salient. And, before you can accuse me of being a sellout, let me assure you—like the theoretical starter yacht—this argument will hold water.

First, let's tackle the difference between sail and sale. Sail can be used as both a noun and a verb. As a noun, sail refers to a piece of fabric attached to a boat to help steer it using wind. As a verb, sail refers to a trip taken on a sailboat. Most of what I know about sailboats I learned from The Beach Boys' version of *Sloop John B*.

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A sale is a noun that refers to the act of selling, specifically when a good or service is traded for some kind of currency.

For example: Mattress stores all think it's a great idea to have big sales over Labor Day weekend. It's as if the store owners all got together and decided to celebrate hard work by giving people a great excuse to do the exact opposite.

Sale is different from sell. Sell is a verb; it is the act of working towards the goal of making the sale. You can sell a boat. Once you sell the boat, you have made a sale.

A cell is a noun. It can refer to a few different things. A cell is a small room in which a prisoner is locked. A cell is also a small group acting within a larger organization. A cell is a basic structural unit of all organisms.

A cell is a battery. "Cell" is short for "cellular," so some people refer to their cellular or mobile phones as their "cell" or, more commonly, "cell phone."

I hope my clarification of sail, sale, sell and cell went swimmingly—which is more than I can say about my own swimming skills. I do plan to take one-on-one adult swimming lessons at some point; it's not exactly "cool" to show up to a friend's hot tub cocktail party wearing a lifejacket over one's swim shirt.

—Curtis Honeycutt is an award-winning syndicated humor columnist. Connect with him on Twitter ( [@curtishoneycutt](https://twitter.com/curtishoneycutt) ) or at [curtishoneycutt.com](https://www.curtishoneycutt.com) .

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