

Don't anger the underground supervolcano

Written by Gallupsun Staff
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There's a supervolcano under Yellowstone National Park called the Yellowstone Caldera that last erupted in a big way approximately 640,000 years ago. The next time it erupts, it could potentially result in a large swath of North America getting covered in ash, creating a sustained volcanic winter that kills roughly half the world's population. Before we get ahead of ourselves, scientists at the Yellowstone Volcano Observatory warn against overreacting to reports that this supervolcano is overdue for another full-scale eruption. In fact, they reassure us that "recurrence intervals of these events are neither regular nor predictable."

Oh, good. The dormant supervolcano is unpredictable. Let's not anger it.

OK, let's set aside the looming volcano apocalypse to discuss the words "sit" and "set." These two are easily confused and often get mistakenly interchanged.

Set means to "put something in a specific place." Set is (almost always) a transitive verb. Transitive verbs are always action verbs and they always require direct objects. Direct objects act on another noun. Take the following sentence:

We should set aside our differences; the big volcano could erupt at any time.

"We" is the subject. "Set" is the transitive verb. "Differences" is the direct object.

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Sit means “to be seated.” Sit is an intransitive verb. Intransitive verbs are always action verbs, and they do not require direct objects. Consider this example:

You shouldn't sit there; the supervolcano is directly beneath your feet!

In the first complete thought before the semicolon, “you” is the subject, and “sit” is the intransitive verb. The sentence has no direct object.

Set requires another thing—you can set secret Oreos on top of the cabinet so your kids don't know about them. You can set your keys on the table. When you sit, you sit yourself and nothing else. I sit. She sits. Banjo, the trained sloth, sits on the top of the giant cheese sculpture. The supervolcano sits and waits to wreak havoc on planet Earth. You get the idea.

Whether or not the Yellowstone Caldera decides to usher in the end of humanity, it's a good idea to understand the difference between “sit” and “set.” Although I doubt the world depends on it, our future lava overlords may give us a pop quiz on the difference between the two. Depending on which version of the multiverse we currently inhabit, having a solid handle on “sit” and “set” could save us from total destruction.

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