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Oops!

Do I Do That?

Anxious
vs.
Eager

While *anxious* is often used as a synonym for *eager*, the two words cannot normally be substituted for each other.

Anxious is only appropriate when used to convey worry, anxiety, and apprehension, whereas *eager* is used to convey enthusiasm.

YES:
"I'm anxious to find out about my grade on the final."

NO:
"I'm anxious to meet Matt and Kristy's cute new baby!"

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An Hour and A Historian

Many people are confused about using *a* or *an* before certain letters, even though most people know the basic rule: *a* before a consonant, *an* before a vowel. But what about consonants that sometimes make vowel sounds, and vice versa?

Instead of thinking about which letter comes after *a* or *an*, think about the sound that follows instead. An *h*, for example, can make a vowel sound (as in *hour* and *honorable*) and a consonant sound (as in *historian* and *hotel*). The letter *u* can be equally troublesome; it also has a vowel sound (as in *uncle* and *umbrella*) and a consonant sound (like a *y*, as in *university* and *union*). When in doubt, go with the sound instead of the letter itself.

The same is also true for acronyms: focus on the sounds. Consequently, *an* AIDS patient may receive *an* EKG and *an* MRI while in *a* hospital.

Need Help on That Report?

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For Your Bookshelf

Having a great writing resource at your fingertips during a big project can be a significant timesaver.

kelcilynn.com recommends the following:

- [A Writer's Reference](#) (Sixth Edition) by Diana Hacker
- [The Copyeditor's Handbook](#) by Amy Einsohn
- [Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary](#)

Nifty Word of the Month

malapropism, *noun*:

the usually unintentionally humorous misuse or distortion of a word or phrase; especially the use of a word sounding somewhat like the one intended but ludicrously wrong in the context.

(Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, July 30, 2008)

[Editor's note: *malapropism* originates from Mrs. Malaprop, a character in *The Rivals*.]

Common Errors

Can't get enough of kelcilynn.com's "Oops! Do I Do That?" section?

Paul Brians, Professor of English at Washington State University, has compiled an enormous list of common errors in American English.

It's bookmark worthy!

<http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/>