

THESE EMBARRASSING, COSTLY, TERRIBLE TYPOS

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By Rolf Gompertz

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Typo n. pl. –os. Informal. A typographical error.  
Typographical error. A mistake in printing, typing or writing.

That's what it says in the New College Edition of The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. But it does not begin to tell the story of these mistakes – these embarrassing, costly, terrible typos. I know -- from collecting them, and from personal experience.

I have used these examples as warnings during 30 years of teaching at UCLA Extension, showing that typos are the bane of a writer's existence – whether you are a reporter, public relations practitioner, or author.

Years ago I came across a typo that I still consider to be the funniest and most embarrassing typo in human history, as far as I know. Many considered it terrible. It was probably also one of the costliest, if not the costliest.

It occurred in London, in 1632, with the printing of Baker's edition of the Bible, known ever since as the "Wicked Bible." The Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," suddenly appeared in a revised version, "Thou shalt commit adultery."

I suspect that this made a number of people in England very happy. But their happiness was short-lived. When the mistake was discovered, Parliament ordered all obtainable editions destroyed, fined the printer 3000 pounds, and forbade all

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unauthorized printings of the Bible henceforth.

This delicious bit of news came to light in an article by Edward G. de Beaumont, about all kinds of typos. It appeared in the May/June 1980 issue of Editors Workshop. The author apparently agreed that the "Wicked Bible" typo took the prize, because he titled his article, "Thou Shalt (not) Commit Adultery."

"Proofread, proofread, proofread, again, and again and again," I harangue my students. "Read your stuff over, two, three

times. Better still, get someone else who can spell and punctuate to proof-read what you have written, also."

I'm sure Pacific Bell wishes somebody had done that – one final time, some years ago. Their Yellow Pages carried an ad for Banner Travel Service, in Sonoma, California. The firm, which specializes in "exotic" travel, suddenly found itself specializing in "erotic" travel, due to a tiny typo. This not only resulted in unwelcome ridicule but also a substantial drop in business, as former clients stayed away. Pacific Bell waived its \$230 monthly fee, but that did not prevent the initiation of a \$10 million lawsuit. I never saw a follow-up story, so I don't know what the outcome was.

But I do know the outcome of something that happened when I was editor of the Torrance Press, a weekly newspaper in the Los Angeles area. The advertising department was jubilant when it landed a two-page double truck (two-page) ad from the Sealy mattress company. The ad carried the company's slogan in big, bold, black letters: "Sleeping on a Sealy, Is Like Sleeping on a Cloud." But something happened in translation from copy to print. That Thursday morning, thousands of readers were introduced to a new slogan: "Sleeping on a Sealy, Is Like Slipping on a Cloud." The paper, of course, offered to make good. The following week, readers discovered a revised message: "Sleeping on a Sealy, Is Like Sleeping on a Clod." That was the end of what we had hoped would be a long-term heavenly relationship.

I was glad, that week, to be in editorial and not in advertising. Still, I have committed my fair share of typos over the years. In a book chapter on writing I wrote:

Good Public Relations writing, like good journalistic writing, should be clear, simple, economical. Short words, short sentences, short paragraphs. Simple rather than complex words. One word rather than two words. The precise word instead of a fuselage of words.

Fuselage of words? Oops! The precise word should have been: fusillade of words! That booboo finally got corrected in a new printing.

Years ago, I learned of an intriguing Chinese cultural custom. I don't know if it still exists. When a Chinese person wrote a letter, the writer always made one deliberate spelling mistake. This was meant as a sign of humility, to acknowledge that the writer did not consider himself a perfect human being. Other cultures have similar customs, leaving works flawed to show that

only God is perfect.

Frankly, I don't have to go out of my way to prove that I am a flawed and imperfect human being. I have left plenty of unintended typos in my wake, that prove the point. My most embarrassing one? It occurred in the author biography at the end of my biblical novel, "Abraham, The Dreamer/An Erotic and Sacred Love Story." In the first line of the biography I left out the "t" in Gompertz. I misspelled my own name! It also slipped by me in the proofreading!

Rolf Gompertz is the author of four current books: "Abraham, The Dreamer – An Erotic and Sacred Love Story," "A Jewish Novel about Jesus," "Sparks of Spirit: How to Find Love and Meaning in Your Life 24 Hours a Day," and a contemporary comedy–drama/screenplay, "The Messiah of Midtown Park" ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)). He lives in North Hollywood, CA. Mailto: [rolfgompertz@yahoo.com](mailto:rolfgompertz@yahoo.com) .

## **How To Discipline During The Terrible Twos**

**By Willie Reynolds**

You didn't think it would happen, but it did. The sweet little angel that you were raising has turned into a hell raiser almost overnight, a being who seems to defy you at every turn and who is bent on the wanton destruction of most of the items in your house. She refuses to listen or to go to bed, commits acts of violence against siblings, refuses to eat on occasion, and says hurtful things to you. The terrible twos are upon you, and you need to decide on the best course of action to ensure everyone's survival.

The key to discipline at any age, including the terrible twos, is to understand why your child's behavior

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has undergone a change. It is probable that your child will not experience the behavioral manifestations typically associated with the terrible twos upon turning that age. Many parents observe changes in their children's behavior well after and sometimes even before the age of two, and the fact is that these behaviors can continue for quite a while.

A child who is undergoing the behavioral transformations of the terrible twos is actually expressing a greater awareness of both himself and those around him than he may have realized existed previously. Combined with a lack of verbal communication skills, your child may become frustrated and begin to act out this frustration in acts of defiance that appear to be merely selfish behavior— in some cases, this may be true, as your child is also learning to stretch her boundaries and push their limits.

The key to discipline in the terrible twos is understanding. It will be very hard to remain calm when your child is outright defying you or throwing a screeching fit, but it is imperative that you focus on the issue and push aside your frustration and anger— punishing your child in anger may only serve to exacerbate the situation. This is the age at which you will want to begin incorporating discipline techniques such as time outs and the taking away of privileges, things that a child will understand.

In short, the best discipline tool you will possess at this developmental juncture will be your own self-discipline. Many parents will cling to the idea that physical punishment is necessary at this stage, but the fact is that when this is applied it can make the situation much worse. Too often physical punishment is a sign of the parent's own frustration. The key to the terrible twos is structure. You should set a schedule for your toddler, as difficult as this may be with your busy life. This is really the only stage in your child's development where a schedule needs to be adhered to, for the simple reason of maintaining the sanity of the entire family. Set strict limits, and do not stray from them when your child tries to stretch them. When it is needed, apply discipline in a consistent manner and pattern, so that the child does not receive a mixed message. Do not make threats that you will simply never back up— you can bet that your child will stop falling for these the instant she senses you are not going to carry through (ie "Well, I guess we will just leave you here in aisle four then!"). Finally, when you have to discipline the child, make sure you explain why you are doing so. Never give in to their tantrums.

Effective discipline during the terrible twos starts with the parent. In truth, it may start long before the terrible twos do. If you spend enough time with your child, developing their communication skills and abilities, the odds are that you will not experience some of the more terrible aspects that the terrible twos can bring.

Willie Reynolds is a parent, and maintains a website on parenting at:

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