

# TRULY SUPER

An Exploration of the Rise of English's  
Most Overused Word in the 21st Century

# TRULY SUPER

It describes everything from our produce — plentiful as the stars in the sky — to colleagues like you — the backbone of this great nation. Because you're the ones who restock that produce, not once, not twice, but three different times each day. You bake bread that rises like the morning sun. And you greet customers with smiles sweeter than the cookies Aunt Sue used to make. The fancy ones with toffee pieces in them.

But why should you care? And what does "TRULY SUPER" mean for you and your loved ones? Keep reading to find out.

The word 'super' was used for the first time in the 1450s as a slang for 'superfine'.

At first, people reserved 'super' for things that were truly world class.

But on the following pages, you'll see how the word devolved to nothing more than a synonym for 'very'. And how, when everything is described as 'super', it means nothing is.

As a store that is the remaining vestige of things that are TRULY SUPER, we shall be the last bastion of the meaning of 'super' and restore this once-majestic word to its rightful place in our dictionary, vocabulary, hearts, and minds.

# A BRIEF, STRANGE HISTORY OF THE WORD 'SUPER'

1590

Shakespeare describes Kate in his play, *The Taming of the Shrew*, as 'super-dainty.'

1934

The first superhero, Mandrake the Magician, makes his debut. He has the ability to make people believe anything, simply by gesturing hypnotically.

1938

Superman makes his debut and nobody cares about Mandrake the Magician anymore.

1951

Songwriters Barney Young and Gloria Parker publish a song called, "Supercalafajalistickeespealadojus" (subtitled "The Super Song"). It's not exactly a hit.

1964

The Sherman Brothers write "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" for the Disney musical film, "Mary Poppins." Barney Young and Gloria Parker throw up in their mouths, sue Disney, and lose.

**1966**

Lamar Hunt, owner of the Kansas City Chiefs, first uses the term 'Super Bowl', "... which obviously can be improved upon", he writes in a letter. The improvement has yet to come.

**1967**

Hypermarkets start to become known as "supermarkets".

**1985**

Super Mario Bros. is released. But that's not even the most super thing to happen this year — a chain of grocery stores in Canada becomes officially known as Real Canadian Superstore.

**2005**

'Super' becomes recognized as an official baby name for girls, ranking 12,120th in popularity.

**2011**

Nicki Minaj releases "Super Bass", which peaks at #6 in Canada. "Boom, badoom, boom, boom, badoom, boom, bass, he got dat super bass", she sings, leaving us all wondering what a "super bass" is and how we can get one.

**2017**

'Super' shoots up 9,000 places on the baby name popularity list from the year before.

**Nov. 2,  
2017**

Kim Kardashian insists in an interview that she and Kanye West are “super normal.”

**Dec. 3,  
2017**

Neil deGrasse Tyson takes to Twitter to disparage supermoons as “an embarrassment to everything else we call ‘super.’”

**Dec. 3,  
2017**

One minute later: Tyson continues his Twitter rant: “If last month’s Full Moon were a 16.0 inch pizza, then this month’s ‘Super’ Moon would be 16.1 inches. I’m just saying”.

**Dec 3,  
2017**

Five minutes later: Tyson flips a table and writes, “If a 16.1 inch pizza is ‘super’ to you, compared with a 16.0 inch pizza, then we have an issue of vocabulary.”

**May  
2018**

Real Canadian Superstore takes a stand and reclaims the meaning of the word ‘super’ one crisp Granny Smith apple at a time.

---

# SUPER

 /'soopər/

*adjective*

*informal*

very good or pleasant; excellent.

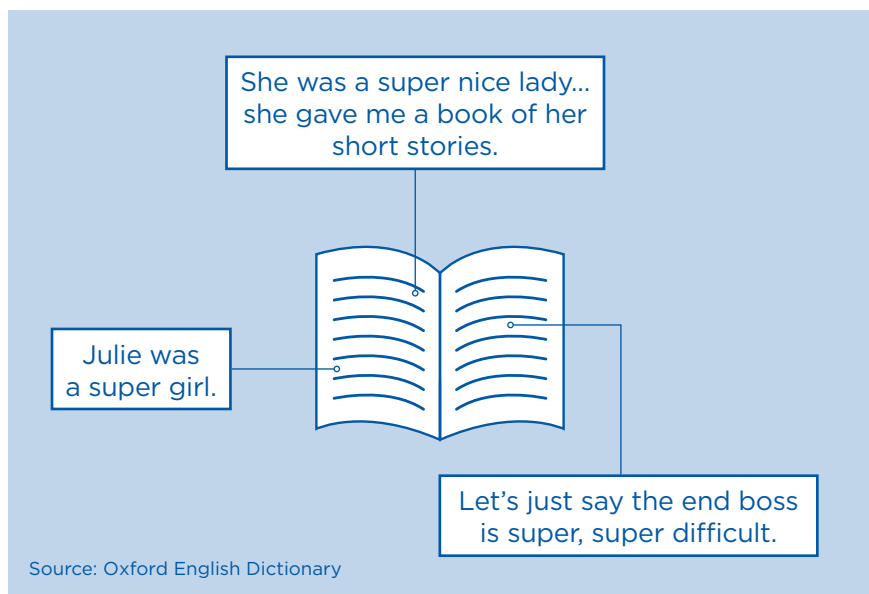
**synonyms:** excellent, superb, first-class, outstanding.

---

Today, the Oxford English Dictionary defines 'super' as "excellent."

We agree with this.

But below, you will see how they use it in some example sentences. What you're about to see is truly disturbing — please brace yourself.



**We aren't the only ones who  
are saddened to see this once  
majestic word reduced to  
nothing more than a synonym  
for 'very' or 'quite.'**



# The New York Times

FASHION & STYLE

## A Certain Word Is Really Getting on My Nerves

Future Tense

By TEDDY WAYNE MARCH 12, 2016



# ELLE

## Overuse Of The Word 'Super' Is SUPER-Annoying: Here Are Some Smashing Alternatives

The English language is marvelously huge, so why do we get addictive to one word all time?



**So now that you know the real meaning of 'super' and why we're defending it, what can you do about it?**

# 01

## INTENTIONALIZE

Any time you're about to use the word 'super,' stop and think: is the thing I'm talking about actually super? Is Jeff really super good at ping-pong, or did he just manage to put a spin on the ball a few times?

# 02

## THESAURISIZE

If you're ever unsure of whether you should use 'super,' think: would 'very' be more accurate? If the answer is yes, you should use that word instead. Or, if you want to be fancy, use 'quite.' People might even mistake you for the Queen of England and invite you to High Tea.

# 03

## CORRECTIZE

Keep in mind that some things really are super. It's not always wrong!

**Correct:** "That sure is a super selection of fresh apples, each one crisper than the next."

**Incorrect:** "Jeff's coming to the party? Super!"

You might be happy that Jeff is attending, but unless he hasn't left his house in five years, 'cool' or 'great' might be more appropriate. Or, if you were born after 1993, 'dope.'

In conclusion, we'd like to thank you for the important work you're doing. Every time you help track the number of days in a row that your colleagues use the word 'super' correctly, you're making history. And when you give a TRULY SUPER coupon to a deserving customer, you become the champion of a movement. And posting pictures on Yammer of the 3-D #TRULYSUPER sign at your store makes you part of the revolution. And if that isn't TRULY SUPER, well, we don't know what is.

Now let's get out there and sell some tongs and fresh chicken! Be sure to check out our TRULY SUPER playlist on Spotify. And if you witness something TRULY SUPER, be sure to share it on Yammer so we can revel in its glory along with you.