

## Words of the Year 2023

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‘Words, words and words, Hamlet responds to the curious Polonius, when he is asked what he was reading. Shakespeare was full of words, old and new, so were his protagonists and antagonists. Byron writes in Don Juan,

“But words are things, and a small drop of ink,  
Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces,  
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions,  
think;... (Byron 1819).

One word may be a word, one word may be a phrase, one word may be a sentence. Whatever space it may have, whatever form it may have, it is the meaningful unit of a language, as the linguist states. Words have lives, words have power. Words are new and words are old, they have birth and death also. Emily Dickinson writes in her poem, A Word is Dead that

“A word is dead  
When it is said,  
Some say.  
I say it just  
Begins to live,  
That day.” (Emily 1896).

*Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries* define it as a single unit of language that means something and can be spoken or written ([https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/word\\_1](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/word_1)). These days, one can witness hundred fundas of words and the worlds they come into being, they live in and they die out. One of such fundas is the Word of the Year (WOTY) which starts with the annual publication (Wort des Jahres) of The Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache (Association for the German

Languages)- government sponsored language society in Germany. It dates back to 1971. But in 1990, the American Dialect Society started announcing the word of the year- determined and decided by a linguist. Since then we have many announcements of the word of the year by the world’s popular and well-established English dictionaries. Cantor writes that the US’s most esteemed lexicon, *Merriam-Webster*, revealed its choice for 2023: “**authentic**”. In its announcement, the dictionary states the word had seen a big jump in searches this year, thanks to discussions “about AI, celebrity culture, identity, and social media ‘’. It makes a lot of sense – the concept of authenticity does, to use another buzzy phrase, sit at the intersection of so much of what’s been on our collective minds (Canter 2023). The reason for this seems to be the user’s minds which are highly occupied with the originality, imitation and authenticity. This has been led by the revolutions brought out by Artificial Intelligence. Collins’s word of the year 2023 is **AI**- artificial intelligence- the modeling of human mental functions by computer programs (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/woty>). Oxford’s word of the year 2023 is **rizz** (verb- means to attract or seduce a romantic or sexual partner. Oxford University Press gives scientific reasons to make a word, word of the year. It describes it as a word or expression that has attracted a great deal of interest over the last 12 months. Every year, we debate candidates for word of the year and choose a winner that is judged to reflect the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of that particular year and to have lasting potential as a word of cultural significance (<https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/>). *Cambridge Dictionary’s* word of the year 2023

is **hallucinate**. It defines ‘**hallucinate**’, as the term got a new additional definition relating to artificial intelligence (AI) producing false information (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/cambridge-dictionary-word-of-year-b2447554.html>).

Thus we got the word of the year 2023 from the four established English dictionaries. The table below describes these with the reasons:

Name of the Dictionary	Word of the Year	Reasons
Merriam-Webster	authentic	Discussion about AI, celebrity culture, identity and social media
Oxford	rizz	reflect the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of that particular year and to have lasting potential as a word of cultural significance
Cambridge	hallucinate	Related to AI and caused by AI
Collins	AI	Emerging field of Artificial Intelligence, impact of AI, alluring activity of AI

What these words highlight is the forces that make them useful and make them visible in the English language. This year is mostly driven by Artificial Intelligence, starting with the revolutions brought about by ChatGPT and other AI tools. This has entered almost all fields of human intelligentsia. This is a fact that technology has been driving our lives in this century. Three words of the year 2023 directly or indirectly go with AI. Collins goes for it directly and Merriam-Webster and Cambridge go with a word that describes what AI has done. As AI is able to create a copy of anything and anyone, then the identity and originality of the real is getting challenged. As AI is able to create content on topics, then the human ability of content creation is being challenged. This way AI has posed challenges for authenticity and originality. This is why Merriam Webster and Cambridge go for authentic and hallucinate as the Words of the Year.

If we do a statistical search on Google for all these words of the year, we get the following as

the result:

#### Google Search Results

AI - 13,88,00,00,000 times  
 Authenticate - 49,50,00,000 times  
 Rizz - 4,36,00,000 times  
 Hallucinate - 2,26,00,000 times

In this result “AI” tops the list followed by “authenticate”. This result also shows that the world is driven by AI. It is AI people are mostly talking about and using in their life and work. Be it school, colleges & universities, be it communication technology or software industry or film or any field, AI has been the topic of discussion. It has been so in focus that scientists are thinking that it may replace human intelligence in the future. The famous astrophysicist Stephen Hawking told the BBC the primitive forms of artificial intelligence we already have, have proved very useful. But I think the development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race.” (The Guardian, Artificial

intelligence could spell end of human race – Stephen Hawking). And this is why Collins selected AI to be the word of the year 2023 as it has brought out technological revolution.

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