Exceptional Expressions For Everyday Events

*Bad* is an adjective that can be applied to many unfortunate situations. The word *bad* can be used to refer to quality, behavior, or state of being. As an evaluative word, *bad*, together with its many synonyms and alternative expressions, could be used very productively in a word line exercise. Food that goes bad is unhealthy or unusable. A child’s bad behavior may be called inappropriate. A student might consider his bad test score as dreadful or atrocious. Bad news could be disheartening or even devastating.

Follow-Ups

- How is being rude different from being naughty?
- What are some situations that might be awful, but not ruinous?
- How is a terrible situation different from a horrific situation?
- What does the phrase “the deal went sour” mean?

The Spanish Connection

Linguists are not certain of the origin of *bad*. Most likely, *bad* was an old English word. The Spanish word for *bad* is *malo* or *mal*. Although the Spanish word is not a cognate, the prefix *mal-*, (which came from French or Latin) is a helpful tool for students. The word *malice* itself is a noun meaning the desire to do something bad or evil. *Mal-*, as a prefix often turns a word into something bad or faulty. *To malfunction* is to not function properly. *Malodorous* is to smell bad.

Word Changes

- Although some people inappropriately add the suffixes -*er* and -*est* to *bad*, the adverb *badly* contains the only inlected suffix for *bad*.
- A very common misuse of the adverb *badly* is “He feels badly” instead of “He feels bad.” To say “He feels badly” means that there is something wrong with the person’s sense of touch.
- In contemporary slang, *bad* can be used almost as its opposite. Calling a pair of shoes bad may mean that the shoes are cool or fashionable. Most often this term is said with enthusiasm or exclamation.
- Care should be taken to not over extend the application of the prefix *mal-*. Words such as *malamute, male*, or *mallard* do not share this prefix.
- The origin of the idiom “between a rock and a hard place” is unknown, but its meaning is clear: To be caught between a rock and a hard place is to be stuck in a bad situation where both available options are difficult or undesirable.
Bad

Bad as a state of being
- evil
- wicked
- corrupt
- immoral
- depraved
- debauched
- ruthless
- merciless
- cruel
- shameless
- regretful
- sorry
- penitent
- ashamed
- contrite
- guilty
- repentant
- sad
- unhappy
- troubled

Bad as a descriptor of things
- lousy
- awful
- terrible
- dreadful
- appalling
- shocking
- ghastly
- horrific
- dire
- unpleasant
- difficult
- distressing
- harsh
- unhealthy
- damaging
- ruinous
- dangerous
- harmful
- atrocious

Bad as in a poor quality
- poor
- inferior
- deficient
- flawed
- faulty
- defective
- substandard
- imperfect
- shoddy
- abysmal
- rotten
- decayed/ing
- decomposing
- putrid
- sour
- rancid

Bad as a behavior
- naughty
- disobedient
- badly
- behaved
- troublesome
- wayward
- mischievous
- unmanageable
- unruly
- willful
- rude

IDIOMS
- Bad seed/egg
- Bad blood
- Bad news travels fast
- Give _____ a bad name
- Between a rock and a hard place
- Get up on the wrong side of the bed
- To bad-mouth

COMMON PHRASES
- Bad off
- Half bad
- To go bad
- Bad guy
- From bad to worse
- Got it bad
- Bad mood
- My bad

THE SPANISH CONNECTION
- grave / grave
- horrible / horrible
- inferior / inferior
- defective / defectuoso
- putrid / pútrido
Bad
Inflected Ending
- badly

Compound Words
- badmouth
- bad-mannered
- bad-tempered
- bad blood
- bad egg
- bad guy
- bad boy

Morphological Family for Bad

Bad