

Harm and Criticism

WORD LIST

admonish alienate censure detriment imperil
incapacitate injurious malign scoff subvert

Harm and criticism are usually negative, but they can also be seen in a positive light. We need to identify and understand harmful things in order to protect ourselves from them. Although criticism can cause harm, it can also be appropriate—or even helpful.

1. **admonish** (ăd-mŏn'ish) *verb* from Latin *ad-*, “to” + *monere*, “to warn”
 - a. To criticize mildly
 - Brad’s father **admonished** the boys for playing music too loudly.
 - b. To warn or advise against something; to caution
 - “Don’t go outside without your umbrella,” **admonished** Mom.

admonition *noun* The manager’s **admonition** against speeding reminded the cab drivers to drive safely.

admonishment *noun* The referee issued an **admonishment** to the two players who fought over the ball.

2. **alienate** (ā' yə-nāt', ā' ē-ə-nāt') *verb* from Latin *alius*, “other”

To cause a person to become distant, unfriendly, or hostile; to lose the friendship or support of

 - Constant showing off and bragging tends to **alienate** people.

alienation *noun* Disagreement over a proposed law led to **alienation** between the two state senators.

3. **censure** (sĕn'shər) from Latin *censura*, “severe judgment”
 - a. *noun* An expression of harsh criticism
 - Japan issued an official **censure** of several foreign companies that were illegally operating fishing fleets in Japan’s waters.
 - b. *verb* To criticize severely
 - The United Nations **censured** the violence against civilians in Sudan.

4. **detriment** (dĕt'rə-mənt) *noun* from Latin *de-*, “away” + *terere*, “to rub”

Damage; harm; something that causes damage or harm

 - A criminal record is a **detriment** to anyone seeking public office.

detrimental *adjective* Inhaling smoke of any kind is **detrimental** to one’s health.

5. **imperil** (im-pĕr'əl) *verb*

To endanger

 - The oil spill **imperiled** local marine life.



admonish

Admonition and admonishment have the same meaning.

6. **incapacitate** (inˈkə-pāsˈɪ-tāt) *verb* from Latin *in-*, “not” + *capacitare*, “to lead”
To disable; to deprive of power or ability
- The backup electrical systems of hospitals ensure that a loss of power will not **incapacitate** any hospital functions.

incapacitation *noun* A severe stroke led to the man’s **incapacitation**.

7. **injurious** (in-jōorˈē-əs) *adjective* from Latin *iniuria*, “a wrong or injustice”
Causing injury or damage
- Eating large quantities of sweets is usually **injurious** to your teeth.

8. **malign** (mə-līn) from Latin *mal-*, “bad”
- a. *verb* To speak evil of; to slander
- How dare you **malign** my reputation by calling me a thief!
- b. *adjective* Evil; harmful
- The evil adviser was a **malign** influence on the king.

malignant (mə-līgˈnənt) *adjective* The **malignant** villain devised a plot to kidnap the hero.

9. **scoff** (skɒf) *verb* from Middle English *scoff*, “mockery”
To make fun of; to mock; to ridicule
- People **scoffed** at the awkward professor—until he won the Nobel Prize.

10. **subvert** (səb-vûrt) *verb* from Latin *sub-*, “under” + *vertere*, “to turn”
To undermine, weaken, or destroy an established institution
- Despite the rebel’s attempts to **subvert** the country’s elections, by blocking routes to the polls, citizens participated in the balloting.
- subversion** *noun* Under the dictator’s rule, simply being charged with “attempted **subversion** of the government” resulted in severe punishment.

Incapacitate comes from the word *capacity*. *Injurious* comes from *injury*.

Malignant is often used to describe a cancerous tumor. The opposite of *malignant* is *benign*.

Scoff is usually used with the preposition *at*, as in “The commentator *scoffed at* all theories different from his.”

WORD ENRICHMENT

The “bad” prefix

Malign, “to speak evil about,” contains the prefix *mal-*, meaning “bad.” *Mal-* is used in many English words. *Maladjusted* means “badly adjusted;” *malfunctioning* means “functioning badly.” The complicated-looking word *malodorous* simply means “bad smelling.” At one time, people thought that “bad air” around swamps caused a dangerous disease, so they named the disease *malaria*. Today, we know that mosquitoes, which are often found around swamps, spread the disease.