

# Microspeak: Calibration

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Today's Microspeak is the word *calibration*. It used to mean the act of adjusting a piece of measuring equipment against a known standard so that it can perform its job accurately. For example, before reading student essays, I go through a calibration exercise, wherein all the readers are given a handful of essays of varying quality and discuss what grade each one deserves so that our scores will be consistent with each other.<sup>†</sup> And then I see the word used in a way that convinces me that I don't know what it means any more. Consider this sentence:

| I would like to get calibration on that individual from those who know him.

How do you "get calibration"? What is this person trying to say, and why won't he use plain English? **Nitpicker's corner**

<sup>†</sup>s/consistent/more consistent/. Obviously, since there is a human element involved, the scores cannot be absolutely consistent.

*There is nothing wrong with your television set.  
Do not attempt to adjust the picture. ...  
We will control the horizontal.  
We will control the vertical.  
– The Outer Limits*

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