

# Words you've had wrong your entire life

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 [devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20100507-01](http://devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20100507-01)

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As a child, my mother would always call out “banzai” when she wanted me to raise my arms above my head so she could put on or take off a pullover shirt. I assumed that *banzai* was the word for “stick your hands in the air!” It wasn’t until well into my adult life that my mother explained to me that, no, *banzai* does not mean “stick your hands in the air.” It’s a Japanese word meaning “ten thousand years”, shouted as a term of approbation and accompanied by (you guessed it) throwing one’s hands into the air. My mother was using it as a play term; in the United States, when you get your child to throw his hands into the air, you might accompany it with a shout of “Touchdown!” What words have you gotten wrong your entire life? Related: [I Used to Believe](#). **Reminder:** This upcoming Sunday is Mother’s Day in the United States, and it honors all mothers, not just your own.

**Bonus niece chatter:** For a time, one of my nieces called a sneeze a *bleshoo*.

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