



Grant Pearson
Brown
Consulting Ltd.

The Presentation &
Business Development
Specialists

Advice *squeezed*
straight from the



*Happy Christmas, Hogmanay and
New Year from everyone at
Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd*



The GPB Team

An Audience of Listeners. An Excess of Christmas Puddings...

How useful are collective nouns?

At GPB, we like to learn. We also like to have fun, so we have taken time out from our busy schedules to work up new words, phrases and documents that we can share, post, email, post, tweet, #, and @.

*Prize competition:
A bottle of Champagne
(or your chosen equivalent)*

What we thought we would do for the holiday season is to offer a prize to the person who sends in the best NEW collective noun paired with its group. There is a sample list on the next page, both for you to enjoy and to stimulate you into action. We will publish the shortlist and winner in our next edition. To make it at least worthy of a challenge, you must stick to the following rules, or no bubbly:

1. You must provide both the group and its collective noun
2. The pair must not be listed on the internet in this manner
3. The format must be 'A/An [X] of [Y]'
4. It cannot be one of the pairs shown below in this article
5. Avoid cheesy things like 'A Sick of Patients', however much it makes you chortle
6. The judge's decision is final.

The advent of Christmas plus a recent

piece of client work has stimulated us to revisit the communication challenges of Collective Nouns. The client asked us in a rare idle moment for the collective noun for a group of accountants. For context, we don't think they were very enamoured with the work that had been done by said accountants, which is a shame because we work with a lot of them, and they are generally a very good bunch of hard-working professionals.

There isn't an 'official' collective noun for accountants, whatever 'official' means, so there's a candidate for the quiz. We've already found account, audit, balance, fudge, journal, return and sum, so you can't have those.

Indeed there seems to be no 'official' repository for any collective nouns, and that's perhaps no surprise given the global nature of our language. Instead, their adoption into the popular vernacular seems to come more from the wit or observations of the creator, subsequent publicity, and shared use resulting from the simple enjoyment of the pairing.

One early finding is that animals, particularly birds, come in for a lot of collective nouns. There are possibly over 100 for birds alone. This is consistent with their habit of being or

In this edition:

Collective noun quiz By GPB team

We provide some festive fun, and some fizz, in return for some help.

Jingle Jangle Jargon By Desmond Harney

Desmond reviews some business-speak and asks you to make its avoidance your Winterval wish.

The How and the What By Lynda Russell-Whitaker

Lynda brings Aristotle and Churchill together in an analysis of the delivery of a presentation.

How shall I address thee? By Ewan Pearson

Ewan tackles the tricky subject of diversity and how we might address other people

An Audience of Listeners. An excess of Christmas Puddings... (Cont'd)

flying together in significant numbers. There are far too many to list here, so we've set up a web page with them in¹.

Some of these nouns have been around for a very long time; many originate from *The Boke of Saint Albans*², first published in 1486, which included a list of 'company terms'. There are many nouns that relate to humans and their chosen careers. We've added a few ourselves.

Second, there can be one collective noun for a whole host of groups, and vice versa. See 'Starlings' and 'Herd' in the tables as examples of these. There is even one for collective nouns: A Peculiar of Collective Nouns. In many cases they seem to make no sense, in others they are funny and/or obvious.

Third, it seems that all humans are categorised, particularly in the military: A single person could be a member of several collectives such as Parents, Engineers, Generals and Aunties, whilst fewer inanimate objects seem to merit aggregation by collection nouns, perhaps because they serve little purpose, e.g. a collective noun for train stations. Finally, it's odd that there are not more that use alliteration, although it's fun when they do.

Collective nouns can help us to communicate more or less effectively. Knowing that you have an *Audience of Listeners* is good to know in advance, but are we really helped by knowing about a *Deceit of Lapwings*?

Group	Collective noun
<i>Careers</i>	
Barbers	Babble
Butchers	Goring
Police	Posse, Squad
Economists	Surplus
Experts	Panel, Excess, Discord
Listeners	Audience
Actors	Cast, Queue, Company...
Comedians	Gaggle, Riot
Grammarians	Conjunction
Jurors	Damning
Dermatologists	Rash
Impressionists	Blur
Witches	Coven
Heroin addicts	Smack
Animal lovers	Hypocrisy (not hypocrisy)
TV critics	Irrelevance

<i>Humans</i>	
People	Community, Choir, Group, Board, Family, Crowd, Team
Girls	Bevy, Gaggle, Giggle
Boys	Plush, Rascal
Parents	Embarrassment, Persistence
Mothers	Consternation, Gaggle
Fathers	Protection, Garage
Grand parents	Nag, Wisdom
Children	Cost Centre
Heirs	Expectation
Wives	Impatience (!)
Husbands	Multiply, Unhappiness (!)
<i>Birds</i> ³	
Chicken, Geese	Flock
Crows	Murder, Mob, Horde
Finches	Charm*
Geese	Gaggle
Lapwings	Deceit
Owls	Parliament
Peacocks	Ostentation
Pheasant, Grouse,	Brace (two)
Partridge	
Ravens	Conspiracy*, Unkindness*
Starlings	Murmuration, Constellation, Scourge, Affliction
<i>Other animals</i>	
Bacteria	Colony, Culture
Bats	Colony
Bees, Wasps	Colony, Swarm
Cats	Clowder, Litter, Pounce, Kindle, Colony (wild)
Hippopotami	Bloat
Lions	Pride
Jellyfish	Smack
Baboons	Flange
Gorillas	Whoop
Tigers	Ambush*
Cows, Antelopes,	Herd
Bisons, Elephants	
Ants, Bees, Eels,	Swarm
Flies, Gnats, Rats	
<i>Inanimate objects</i>	
Aeroplanes	Squadron
Buildings	Set, Cluster, Town, City, Village
Cars	Fleet, Pool
Christmas Puddings	Excess
Ships, Boats	Fleet, Armada, Flotilla

Please do send in any you would like added to the list on our website.

By GPB Team

- <https://www.gpb.eu/2019/12/dictionary-of-collective-nouns.html>
- The Boke of Saint Albans, by William Blades, Juliana Berners, 2015
- Country Life, September 13, 2017 Paula Lester <https://www.countrylife.co.uk/nature/collective-nouns-for-birds-68344>

* indicates there is a book with this name.

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