This lovely menace spreads unbelievably quick —

... he will probably die quicker —David Dempsey,
*N.Y. Times Mag.*, 23 June 1974

The usual choice in such contexts—and the one rec-
commended by usage commentators—is quickly:

| A brilliant student, he moved quickly through his  |
| studies—*Current Biography*, March 1967         |
| ... he'd rise and walk quickly to Floral Hall —  |

Note that quick is also distinguished from quickly in
that it almost always follows rather than precedes the
verb it modifies ("They came quick," not "They quick
came"); but "They came quickly" or "They quickly
came").

See also FLAT ADVERBS.

quiet, quiten  *Quieten*, a synonym of quiet, was con-
sidered a "superfluous word" by Fowler 1926, who
found that "while good writers seem to avoid it, is com-
mon in uneducated talk." Despite Fowler's objec-
tions, quieten has persisted in British English, where its
use is now by no means limited to the uneducated or
unskilled:

... making quietening gestures with both hands —
William Golding, *Free Fall*, 1959

When, at last, Lord Snowdon had quietened us —V.
S. Pritchett, *New Yorker*, 24 June 1985

... she thought Roberta was quietening down —
Doris Lessing, *The Good Terrorist*, 1985

In American English, the verb used is quiet:

... quieted the air like a summer Sunday morning
—Zelda Fitzgerald, *Ladies' Home Jour.*, January
1971

... because, as one camp leader said, "They never
quieted down." —Alfred Lubrano, *Plain Dealer*
(Cleveland, Ohio), 27 July 1985

quip  Bremner 1980 and Copperud 1970, 1980 find
fault with the way newspaper journalists use the verb
quip to point out that some remark that looks dull in
print sounded pretty funny at the time. This use is by
no means limited to the daily papers:

This moving little speech is even more of a success
than the music, which, after all, as I.S. quips, "was
half-Tchaikovsky ... and half Rimsky-Korsakov ...
" —Robert Craft, *Stravinsky*, 1972

In 1961, when Hirt estimated that he would clear
about $200,000, he quipped, "I've already called off
the elopement drills for my daughters." —*Current
Biography*, February 1967

"We're just a small company," he quips —Alvin A.
Butkus, *Dun's*, October 1971

"Just enough to put him on easy street," she quipped,
to his relief —James Purdy, *Cabot Wright Begins*, 1964

You probably need to have been there.

quite  A number of recent commentators notice that
quite is used in two almost antithetical senses, one
approximately "fully, altogether, entirely" and the other
approximately "to a considerable extent, moderately."
In this respect, quite operates much like rather (see
rather 2). There are actually three uses of quite, ac-
according to the OED and dictionaries that follow the OED
analysis. The first use is a complete one originally
used with verbs and participle to emphasize that an
action is complete.

... an endeavour to recapture the treasure, which
they were quite satisfied was hopeless —James Ste-
phens, *The Crock of Gold*, 1912

He felt that the world he had loved had quite gone
—Edmund Wilson, *N.Y. Times Book Rev.*, 20 July
1986

When used this way with adjectives and adverbs, quite
emphasizes the fullest degree of the adjective or
adverb. It functions as an intensive, emphasizing the
meaning without changing it.

To-morrow I bury her, and then I shall be quite
alone —Charles Lamb, letter, 12 May 1800

If you are quite sure you would have no use of them,
I may as well destroy them —Lewis Carroll, letter,
21 June 1881

... bragged falsely of having made conquests of
quite other girls —Renata Adler, *Pitch Dark*, 1983

From the intensive use a weaker, subtractive sense
developed, a sense used not to intensify but to tone
down. In the words of Fitzedward Hall 1873, it occupies
"a place intermediate between 'altogether' and 'some-
what'."

As I came home through the woods with my string
of fish, trailing my pole, it being now quite dark, I
catched a glimpse of a woodchuck stealing across my
path —Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, 1854

Thoreau's quite is exemplary: it brings the adjective up
just short of its full power.

By all accounts the subtractive sense is the prevalent
one in 20th-century English, but in many particular
instances it is hard to be certain that the subtractive
sense rather than the intensive sense is intended:

Her uncovered ears were quite white and very small
—Aldous Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves*, 1925

... and the weather in the main has been quite good
—E. B. White, letter, 3 Mar. 1965

You would think that the coexistence of these two
uses would lead to problems of ambiguity and confu-
sion, but in practice this seems not often to be the case.
For although the lexicographer must try to determine
the exact meaning of each occurrence of a word, the
reader is under no such constraint. The distinction
between the two senses is not always crucial to a general
understanding of the sentence, when it is, the reader has
the larger context for help. And the reader can always
use a negative with quite when he or she wants to
emphasize a falling just short:

In my opinion, my work ... ain't quite good enough
—William Faulkner, 13 May 1957, in *Faulkner in
the University*, 1959

He does not quite say that a propitious environment
would create a population composed entirely of

In the middle of the 19th century there was some rephrasing of the use of *quite* before a and a noun—Bache 1869, Richard Grant White 1870, and Ayres 1881 all objected, for instance. There were two bases for objection: the commentators noticed that *quite* was not an intensive in the expressions, and they did not believe an adverb should modify a noun. Fitzgerald Hall 1873 ignored the theoretical grammatical questions and was content to produce evidence that the idiom had been in use at least since the middle of the 18th century:

> Quite a rake—Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, 1740 (in Fitzgerald Hall)

We decided, though, that he would be quite a swell guy sober—James Thurber, letter, April 1936

Irene Franey, a little older than I, was quite a beauty—John O’Hara, letter, 30 Dec. 1963

We have some British examples in which this *quite a* has a clearly intensive function:

> ...the crow that must have been shot quite a month before—Doreen Tovey, *Cats in the Belfry*, 1958

> There are quite a dozen significant regional languages—W. B. Lockwood, *A Panorama of Indo-European Languages*, 1972

In these two examples *quite* means something like “every bit of, fully.”

*Quite* is also used before the:

> “He was quite the picture of a middle-aged businessman,” recalls William O. Bourke—Faye Rice, *Fortune*, 24 Nov. 1986

> I am quite the wrong person to write this foreword—Philip Larkin, *Required Writing*, 1983

These are established idioms, beyond cavil.

**quiz** Several critics feel that *quiz* is an informal word which, as Bernstein 1965 puts it, “is best restricted to the campus and the television screen.” They particularly object to its use, both as a noun and as a verb, in reference to a formal investigation or examination, as in a criminal trial or by a legislative committee. Our evidence shows that such usage is extremely uncommon in running text (it may well occur more often in headlines, as the critics suggest). We have, in fact, only one bona fide citation for it:

> ...the investigation into RFC lending policies, ... and currently the quiz on the extracurricular activities, if any, of Chairman Boyle of the Democratic National Committee—*Christian Science Monitor*, 10 Oct. 1951

We do have a few citations in which the verb *quiz* is used to describe close questioning in a police investigation, but not in a formal setting:

> They quizzed the Forest Service lookouts in the area. Some suspicious facts emerged—Frank Cameron, *Saturday Evening Post*, 14 Aug. 1954

> ...he and Haquin went to quiz the crew of a patrol car who had radioed in the report—Michael Butterworth, *Cosmopolitan*, January 1972

Such usage is entirely consistent with the verb’s established sense, “to question closely.”

**quandam** See *erstwhile, quandam, whilom.*

**quote** 1. The noun *quote*, short for *quotiation*, was first recorded in 1888:

> Stodgy ‘quotations’ from the ancients?—*Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 Dec. 1888 (OED)

One of its chief early uses was in the world of publishing to denote a passage of favorable criticism quoted as advertisement for a book:

> ...three sentences that might have been framed especially to give the publisher an easy ‘quote’—*Century Mag.*, February 1919

Its occurrence in general contexts was fairly rare until the 1940s, when we found it being used in a number of popular newspapers and magazines and very often without the distancing quotation marks of earlier years:

> Miss Ross works with quotes from letters and diaries—Ernestine Evans, *N.Y. Herald Tribune Book Rev.*, 15 Oct. 1944

> With a quote from the *Troy Times*—Ben Lucien Burman, *Saturday Rev.*, 28 Dec. 1946

> ...a distorted quote from a speech before the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship—*Atlantic*, August 1948

> ...riddles his opposition with a salvo of quotes—Richard E. Lauterbach, *New Republic*, 11 Apr. 1949

> ...some witty quotes picked from their own works—*Time*, 18 Apr. 1949

Its use since the 1940s has continued to be common and, for the most part, unremarkable. It occurs most often in writing that has a casual tone or, at least, is not highly formal:

> It was mighty thoughtful of you to send me that quote from dear old Sam Adams’s letter—James Thurber, letter, 3 Dec. 1958

> ...he said something to the effect that sex should be used sparingly, and refused to give Harcourt, Brace a quote for an ad—John O’Hara, letter, 9 Dec. 1961

To put quotes in the mouths of living people—*Seymour Krim, Evergreen*, August 1967

> It started with quotes taken out of context—*Suzette Haden Elgin, English Jour.*, November 1976

> ...is obvious even before the quotes are collected—*David Harris, N.Y. Times Mag.*, 9 Mar. 1980

Only after the sweat has dried comes the quote—Wilfrid Sheed, *Harper’s*, February 1984

This sense of *quote* has met with strong disapproval in some quarters. Such commentators as Bernstein 1965, Follett 1966, Shaw 1975, and Trimmer & McRimmon 1988 have disparaged its use in writing, and the Heritage 1969, 1982 usage panel rejected it by a large majority. Some other critics, however, have taken a more tolerant view. Harper 1985, for example, accepts its use in writing that has “a conversational tone”: Bremmer 1980 calls it “standard in the publishing business”, and The Right Handbook 1986 suggests that