

oxymoron is derived from two Greek words opposed in meaning, *oxus* ‘sharp’ and *moros* ‘dull’ or ‘stupid’. It is a figure of speech in which two words of opposite meaning are brought together for special effect, e.g. *a cheerful pessimist* and *harmonious discord*. The name is properly used of a deliberate literary device, and should not be used to mean simply an accidental or casual contradiction in terms:

☒ *Robert proves why it's no oxymoron to be known as a creative producer—Take One Magazine, 2003.*

☒ *The divide is between man-centered worship (surely an oxymoron) and God-centered worship—religious website, 2004 [OEC].* In neither of these sentences is there an oxymoron in the proper sense. The offence is even worse when the contradiction is not contained within a term at all:

☒ *It seems like an oxymoron, but rock has benefited enormously from singers who really shouldn't have been singing—Pitchfork Media album reviews, 2004.* The word wanted here is *paradox*.