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## Ms. Particular Presents: Complement vs. Compliment

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“Complement” and “complementary” are often mistakenly written as “compliment” and “complimentary” in scientific writing.

“Complement” means to “add to,” “fill out,” or “supplement.”

“Compliment” means to say something nice about (usually) or to give away for free (e.g., tickets, meals, hotel rooms). We generally have a lot more complements than compliments (no flattery and no free lunch in physics) in science writing.

## **It's almost always *complimentary* in science—think “*supplimentary*”**

“Several studies have investigated  $^{72}\text{Se}$  in beam, so the purpose of this project was to provide new *complimentary* data from  $\beta$  decay.”

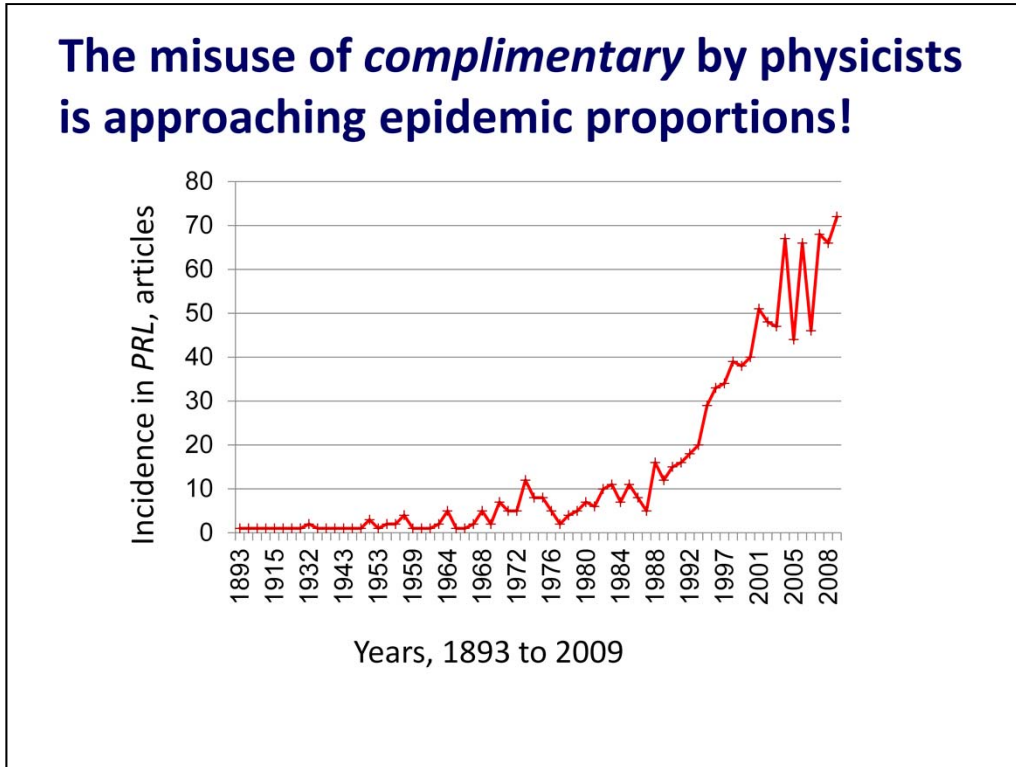
“...there are many other observables which one could compute using the same  $2 \rightarrow 2$  hard kinematics which would provide *complimentary* tests of QCD.”

“...it is important to perform *complimentary* investigations of the response of the HFLT phase to a nonmagnetism-inducing impurity.”

“The  $\Delta R_{1,2}$  method should be viewed as *complimentary* to the  $\Phi^*$  and  $z$  methods and for some tip-sample systems (Sec. V) we will show that it is the only applicable method to acquire accurate  $\Phi$  and  $z_0$  values.”

These four examples were taken from 1095 results for a search of “complimentary” in *Physical Review Letters*. In an admittedly unscientific sampling, Ms. Particular did not find one instance of “complimentary” being used correctly. <sigh>

The missing commas in examples 2 and 4 will be dealt with separately.



The distribution by years of spurious “complimentary”s shows a dramatic increase since the mid-1990s, which Ms. Particular views with alarm.