

## Bringing about DEATH . . .

<b>FATAL</b>	<b>DEADLY</b>	<b>LETHAL</b>	<b>MORTAL</b>
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All these adjectives apply to something which has caused or is capable of causing death. There are a couple of cases where collocations including these adjectives overlap, e.g. a *disease* can be *deadly*, *lethal* or *fatal*, although a specific disease can only be *fatal*, e.g. 'He suffered a *fatal* heart attack' or 'The infection proved *fatal*'. Weapons can be both *lethal* and *deadly* but not *fatal*.

**FATAL** - may refer to either the future or the past; in either case it emphasizes inevitability and the inescapable – the disastrous, whether death or dire misfortune. Fatal describes conditions, circumstances, or events that have already caused death or are virtually certain to do so in the future: a '*fatal* accident/crash/collision...'; a '*fatal* disease/illness...'

It is also used in situations where someone is hurt, such as *attack*, *blow*, *injury*, *shot* and *wound*, and in situations involving a very costly mistake with the words '*mistake*', '*error*' and '*blunder*', as in 'Never underestimate him because you will be making a *fatal* error'.

**DEADLY** – looks to the future, and suggests that which is likely to cause death (though not inevitably so): a '*deadly* poison'; a '*deadly* weapon...'

*Deadly* is often used in colloquial speech either as an intensifier, or with the figurative sense of: not pleasing to the senses: 'It was such a *deadly* party that we left after hadly an hour.'

Nouns that specifically collocate with **deadly** include '*poison*', '*virus*' and '*threat*', as in 'In the wrong hands, spent nuclear material could pose a *deadly* threat', while nouns that collocate with **lethal** include '*dose*', '*injection*' and '*effect*'.

**LETHAL** – points to the future but, like many other words of Latin origin, suggests a more technical usage. It refers to a thing that acts as a sure agent of death and may have been created solely for that purpose: '*the lethal* technology of modern warfare'.

*Lethal* is also used with words that specifically indicate a mixture that can cause death, as in 'She was found dead in her kitchen, having taken a *lethal* cocktail of alcohol and weedkiller' and 'John was a heavy drug user and an alcoholic – a *lethal* combination'.

- Three minutes after the fire started, the house was full of *lethal* fumes.
- The poison produced by the spider is so *lethal* that it will paralyze a bird or a monkey immediately.

**MORTAL** – is a very literary word which looks to the past and refers to death which has actually occurred. It describes a condition or action that produces death, typically in a context of combat: '*a mortal* wound'; '*delivered a mortal* blow.'

<b>weapons</b>	error	dose of poison	wounds	danger	combat
<b>blow</b>	poison	injuries	accident	mistake	step
<b>disease</b>	injection	fall	drug	threat	terror
<b>coil</b>	chamber	sin	enemies	gas	virus

☉ Arrange these words in four columns, under the adjectives they collocate:

<b>FATAL . . .</b>	<b>DEADLY . . .</b>	<b>MORTAL . . .</b>	<b>LETHAL . . .</b>
...blow	...weapons	...blow	...weapons
...disease	...disease	...coil	...disease