**Word for Word**

**Imply or Infer?**

*Imply* and *infer* both refer to communication that is not explicit or direct, but they describe different points of view.

To *imply* something is to express something indirectly or to say something without explicitly stating it.¹

**Example:**

By commenting on the study’s large sample size, the authors *implied* that previous studies had been underpowered.

To *infer* something is to deduce it or figure it out, or to draw a conclusion from information that may or may not be *implied*.²

**Examples:**

Because the data were incomplete, we were unable to *infer* a causal relationship.

It may help to remember that speakers (or writers) *imply*, while listeners (or readers) *infer*.³

Betsy’s mumbled excuse *implied* that she didn’t want to join us for lunch.

We *inferred* from Betsy’s mumbled excuse that she didn’t want to join us for lunch.

**References**

1. Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. Springfield, MA:
Merriam-Webster; 2003:624.


--Amy Ninetto

Image Credit: © Can Stock Photo / monkeybusiness

Copyright © 2020, All rights reserved. Research Medical Library, Scientific Publications Services.