An anomaly is an abnormality, a blip on the screen of life that doesn’t fit with the rest of the pattern. The noun anomaly comes from the Greek word anomolia, meaning “uneven” or “irregular.” When something is unusual compared to similar things around it, it’s the anomaly.

- If you are an Olympian who comes from a family of bookish types who all find it strenuous to walk the dog, you are an anomaly.
- If you are a breeder of black dogs and one puppy comes out pink, that puppy is an anomaly.

Directions: Discuss the meaning of the word with your students, with special emphasis on any variations or nuances of the word specific to your discipline. Consider taking it a step further by using one or all of the following ideas as you involve students with the new vocabulary. Remember to preview all content you intend to share with students. Not all items on the lists provided below are appropriate for all classes or age levels.

#1 Read the first two paragraphs in this article concerning social unrest in Thailand from “The Opinion Pages” of The New York Times:  

#2 Read the first four paragraphs in this article Medicare fraud from Time:  

#3 Read this article on false claims about Ford overstating their Hybrid’s MPG rating from the Chicago Tribune:  

#4 Talk about the definition as it applies to astronomy (position of a planet as defined by its angular distance from its perihelion (as observed from the sun) and how that relates to the common definition or to the definition as it applies to your discipline.
#5 Talk about anomalies as congenital birth defects or other deviations from the normal or common order or form or rule. At the end of this document you will find a list of 30 different types.

#6 Talk about anomalies as people who are unusual. At the end of this document you will find a list of 17 different types.

#7 Watch this video (1min, 49sec.) about an anomaly (probably natural phosphorescence) on the surface of the ocean captured by the ISS in July of this year; discuss how this qualifies as an anomaly, and how, perhaps, it doesn’t.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPO3zgsgRog
30 Types of congenital defects:

- birth defect, congenital abnormality, congenital anomaly, congenital defect, congenital disorder
- a defect that is present at birth
- ablepharia
- a congenital absence of eyelids (partial or complete)
- albinism
- the congenital absence of pigmentation in the eyes and skin and hair
- anencephalia, anencephaly
- a defect in brain development resulting in small or missing brain hemispheres
- ametria
- congenital absence of the uterus
- color blindness, color vision deficiency, colour blindness, colour vision deficiency
- genetic inability to distinguish differences in hue
- epispadias
- a congenital abnormality in males in which the urethra is on the upper surface of the penis
- clinoccephalism, clinoccephaly
- a congenital defect in which the top of the head is depressed (concave instead of convex)
- clinodactyly
- a congenital defect in which one or more toes or fingers are abnormally positioned
- macroglossia
- a congenital disorder characterized by an abnormally large tongue; often seen in cases of Down's syndrome
- Down syndrome, Down's syndrome, mongolianism, mongolism, trisomy 21
- a congenital disorder caused by having an extra 21st chromosome; results in a flat face and short stature and mental retardation
-acrocephaly, oxycephaly
- a congenital abnormality of the skull; the top of the skull assumes a cone shape
- cheiloschisis, cleft lip, harelip
- a congenital cleft in the middle of the upper lip
- cleft palate
- a congenital fissure of the hard palate
- amelia
- congenital absence of an arm or leg
- meromelia
- congenital absence of part of an arm or leg
- encephalocele
- protrusion of brain tissue through a congenital fissure in the skull
- meningocoele
- a congenital anomaly of the central nervous system in which a sac protruding from the brain or the spinal meninges contains cerebrospinal fluid (but no nerve tissue)
- myelomeningocoele
- a congenital defect of the central nervous system in which a sac containing part of the spinal cord and its meninges protrude through a gap in the vertebral column; frequently accompanied by hydrocephalus and mental retardation
- plagiocephaly
- congenital malformation of the skull in which the main axis of the skull is oblique
- polysomy
- congenital defect of having one or more extra chromosomes in somatic cells
- hermaphrodism, hermaphroditism
- congenital condition in which external genitalia and internal sex organs have both male and female characteristics
pseudohermaphroditism
congenital condition in which a person has external genitalia of one sex and internal sex organs of the other sex

scaphocephaly
congenital malformation of the skull which is long and narrow; frequently accompanied by mental retardation

congenital heart defect
a birth defect involving the heart
rachischisis, schistorrhachis, spina bifida
a not uncommon congenital defect in which a vertebra is malformed; unless several vertebrae are affected or there is myelomeningocele there are few symptoms; can be diagnosed by amniocentesis
spinocebellar disorder
any of several congenital disorders marked by degeneration of the cerebellum and spinal cord resulting in spasticity and ataxia
hyperdactyl, polydactyl
birth defect characterized by the presence of more than the normal number of fingers or toes
syndactylism, syndactyl
birth defect in which there is partial or total webbing connecting two or more fingers or toes
ankyloglossia, tongue tie
a congenital anomaly in which the mucous membrane under the tongue is too short limiting the mobility of the tongue
17 Types of unusual people:

anachronism
a person who seems to be displaced in time; who belongs to another age

aberrant
one whose behavior departs substantially from the norm of a group

albino
a person with congenital albinism: white hair and milky skin; eyes are usually pink

automaton, zombi, zombie
someone who acts or responds in a mechanical or apathetic way

eccentric, eccentric person, flake, geek, oddball
a person with an unusual or odd personality

behemoth, colossus, giant, goliath, monster
someone or something that is abnormally large and powerful

Jekyll and Hyde
someone with two personalities - one good and one evil

kook, odd fellow, odd fish, odd man out, queer bird, queer duck
someone regarded as eccentric or crazy and standing out from a group

misfit
someone unable to adapt to their circumstances

rara avis, rare bird
a rare or unique person

transexual, transsexual
a person who has undergone a sex change operation

ugly duckling
an ugly or unpromising child who grows into a beautiful or worthy person

anthropoid, ape
person who resembles a nonhuman primate

crackpot, crank, fruitcake, nut, nut case, screwball
a whimsically eccentric person

dork, jerk
a dull stupid fatuous person

nutter, wacko, whacko
a person who is regarded as eccentric or mad

addle-head, addlehead, birdbrain, loon
a person with confused ideas; incapable of serious thought