



万水英语工具书系列

Hutchinson

# 英语用法袖珍词典

影印版

the HUTCHINSON Pocket Dictionary  
of  
English Usage

[英] Helicon 公司 著



Helicon



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## 内容提要

本书原版由英国的Helicon公司出版。书中细致地讲解了在工作、学习和生活中使用英语时经常遇到的一些问题,对语法、标点符号、英美拼写、文体和写作都有清晰易懂的解释。

本书适合大中专院校师生使用,同时也适合英语爱好者作为参考书。

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***The* HUTCHINSON**

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# Introduction

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This guide sets out to give clear, straightforward advice on avoiding errors in spoken and written English.

Most people are at some time uncertain or confused about which word to use in a particular context, how to pronounce or spell a word, or whether they are using a word in the correct meaning. The guide aims to help you choose the right word or the most appropriate way of expressing yourself.

The entries cover the following areas of usage:

**meanings** Is it correct to use the word *aggravate* to mean 'make worse' or to use *locate* to mean 'find'?

**confusables** What is the difference between *complement* and *compliment*? Or between *flaunt* and *flout*?

**grammar** Is it *different from*, *different to* or *different than*? Why do some people regard it as wrong to split infinitives?

**punctuation** What are the rules about using the comma, the apostrophe, quotation marks, etc?

**parts of speech** What exactly is a preposition? Or a participle?

**style** What is the right way to set out a business letter? How can you ensure that your writing is non-sexist?

**spellings** Should it be *-ise* or *-ize*? What is the US spelling of *pyjamas*?

**pronunciation** What is the right way to pronounce such words as *controversy*, *lichen*, *macho*?

All entries in the guide are arranged alphabetically, whether dealing with individual words such as *anticipate* or *hopefully*, or topics such as *American English* or *letter writing*.

## ***Introduction***

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While recommendations are given wherever possible, the entries generally avoid making a simplistic and didactic distinction between correct and incorrect usage. Language is changing all the time, and some usages that were once disapproved of are now widely accepted as perfectly good English. Equally, some uses that are natural and common in informal contexts may be considered inappropriate in formal contexts.

The entries attempt to explain where there is some dispute surrounding a particular word or construction and to state clearly which usages are acceptable in formal English, which are acceptable in informal English, and which are still generally considered to be wrong. Where there are significant differences between British and American usage these are clearly explained.

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# A

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**a or an** A is used before consonants, **an** before a vowel sound. A comes before words that begin with a **u**, but are pronounced as though they began with a **y**: *a union, a useful gadget*. *An* comes before a silent **h**: *an heir, an honour*. Some people still use *an* before **h** in words from French, where the **h** was silent: *an hotel*. This is rather old-fashioned. There is no reason to use *an* before an **h** which is sounded.

**abbreviations** Abbreviations are used to save time and space, and to make long names of organizations and long technical terms easier to remember and less tedious to refer to repeatedly in an extended piece of writing such as a newspaper article or textbook. In such contexts, if the abbreviation is not a very common one, the long name or technical term is often given in full at the first mention, with the abbreviation in brackets after it. After that just the abbreviation is used.

Every day more and more abbreviations appear, and old ones die. No sooner had we learned to refer to the Common Market as the EC rather than the EEC, than it became the EU.

Generally it is acceptable to write abbreviations either with or without full stops, but the trend is towards leaving them out, as in *BBC, Dr, HoD, H E Bates, Prof E Potter*. Punchy writing such as that found in advertisements tends to leave out full stops, whereas formal non-technical writing is more traditional, and full stops are often used.

There are various kinds of abbreviation. The most common is the set of initials, for example *DIY* for Do It Yourself, *DSS* for Department of Social Security, *gbh* for grievous bodily harm, *JCB* for a machine invented by Joseph Cyril Bamford.

Some abbreviations are the first part of a longer word and are pronounced as words, not said as a sequence of letters of the alphabet.



Examples are *ad* and *advert* from advertisement, *bra* from brassière, *gym* from gymnasium, and *limo* from limousine.

Other abbreviations made by cutting off the end of the word are not used in speech, for example *adv* for adverb and *cont* for continued. If these need to be read aloud, they are read as the unabbreviated full forms.

Some words lose bits in the middle. *Bdg* stands for building; *Chas* for Charles. *Dr*, *ft*, *Mr*, and *Mrs* are other examples. These are read aloud as their unabbreviated full forms.

A few words lop off the first part, for example *bus* and *plane*, though these are now so well established that they are really no longer thought of as reduced forms, but as words in their own right.

There is a significant proportion of abbreviations which it is possible for an English speaker to pronounce as words rather than as sequences of letters of the alphabet. For example, *NATO* is said [nay-toe] and never [en eh tee oh]. Sets of initials like *NATO*, and new forms made up of the first parts of two or more words, such as *OXFAM*, are called **acronyms**. Further examples are *UNESCO*, *Amstrad*, *GATT*, *ACORN*, *dinky*, *Aids*, *laser*, *ERNIE*, and *CLEAR*. A few abbreviations are pronounced both ways, *VAT* being the prime example.

Acronyms are often new words. The word *Nato* did not exist before it began to be used as a quick way of referring to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It is not, in fact, a very typical English word, although it is easy enough for English speakers to pronounce. *COHSE*, the Confederation of Health Service Employees, looks un-English, but is pronounced [cosy].

*Laser*, on the other hand, looks thoroughly at home in English. There are probably many people who are quite unaware that it is an acronym, derived from: light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation. The fact that it is not written in capital letters, and is a common noun rather than the name of an organization, also helps to disguise it. This is the sort of acronym that easily makes its way into a dictionary. *Yuppie*, from: young upwardly mobile professional, and *radar*, from: Radio Detection and Ranging, are other examples.

Some acronyms are existing words taken over as more easily used alternatives to full forms, *ACORN*, for example, which stands for: A

Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods, a sampling system based on different kinds of dwelling; *AIDS*, from: acquired immune deficiency syndrome; *WASP*, from: White Anglo-Saxon Protestant.

Some organizations deliberately choose terms for products, projects, or equipment so that the initials will make an existing name. An example of this is *ERNIE*, from: Electronic Random Number Indicator Equipment. This is the machine that chooses the winners of Premium Bonds. A *TESSA* is a Tax Exempt Savings Bond. These short and friendly-sounding names suggest something pleasant and accessible. Another case of image manipulation by acronym is the choice of the title Fast Reactor Experiment, Dounreay to give *FRED*.

Campaigning organizations, in particular, choose names to yield an acronym that is suggestive of their aims. *ASH*, Action on Smoking and Health wants people to stop smoking; *GASP* is the Group Against Smog Pollution; *SCUM*, the Society for Cutting Up Men, wants to attract your attention.

The form in which acronyms are written varies. The small number that are common nouns rather than names are often found in small letters, and become indistinguishable from words. These are nouns such as *laser*, *radar*, and *aids*. The plural is made, as with most ordinary words, by simply adding *s*, for example *KOs*, *JCBs*, *lasers*. No apostrophe is needed.

Names of organizations are most often written as a string of capital letters without full stops, but practice is variable, and you may see *Unesco* or UNESCO as well as *UNESCO*. You may even see *U.N.E.S.C.O.*

Note that not all abbreviations that could be acronyms are so in fact. *BA*, for example, is always said [bee eh] and never [bar]. A particularly interesting case is *ETA*. When it means 'Estimated Time of Arrival' it is an abbreviation, and is pronounced [ee tee eh], but when it stands for the Basque separatist group it is an acronym, and is pronounced [etter], to rhyme with *better*.

One problem with abbreviations that are pronounceable as words is that when you meet a new one in print, you may not know which way to say it. This is more of a problem now that all abbreviations, not just acronyms, tend to be written without full stops. A full stop after each

letter usually means that the abbreviation is pronounced as a string of letters.

**abdicate, abrogate, arrogate or derogate** To **abdicate** is to renounce formally, especially a monarch the throne: *Edward VIII abdicated in order to marry a divorcee; She abdicated her rights to a pension.* To **abrogate** a law is to cancel or annul it: *The old law on Sunday trading has been abrogated.* To **arrogate** a thing is to claim it presumptuously or without right: *He arrogated special privileges for the staff.* To **derogate** a thing is to lessen or detract from it in some way: *It would derogate from the park's attraction to compare it to a playground.*

**abjure or adjure** To **abjure** something is to renounce it or abstain from it, with the implication that this is done publicly: *Members of the sect were required to abjure all alcoholic drink.* To **adjure** someone to do something is to request them solemnly to do it: *The magistrate adjured the witness to tell the truth frankly.*

**-able or -ible** See  $\diamond$ spelling rules.

**abridgement or abridgment** This word can be spelled either way.

**abrogate** See  $\diamond$ abdicate.

**abstinent or abstemious** **Abstinent** relates to abstaining or holding back from something, especially food and (alcoholic) drink: *He holds that it is good for the body to be abstinent from time to time.* **Abstemious** means not taking too much food and (alcoholic) drink: *His abstemious habits do not prevent him from enjoying parties.*

**abuse or misuse** To **abuse** something is to use it badly or wrongly: *The bank manager abused the confidence of his customers.* To **misuse** a thing is to use it in a way for which it was not intended, whether wrongly or not: *'A horse misused upon the road / Calls to Heaven for human blood'* (William Blake).

**accede or concede** To **accede** to something is to agree to it: *I accede to your request* (I accept it); to **concede** something is to accept it grudgingly or reluctantly: *I concede your superiority* (I have to admit you are better).

**accept or except** To **accept** something or someone is to take them: *Credit cards are accepted* (you can use them to pay); to **except** them is to exclude them: *Credit cards are excepted* (you'll have to pay by cash or cheque).

**accessory or accessory** **Accessory** is the normal spelling of the word to mean something extra or additional: *The vacuum cleaner had several accessory parts*. In the legal sense, however, the spelling **accessary** is sometimes found: *She was charged with being an accessary to the crime* (she had taken a part in it). In the USA, **accessory** is the spelling for both senses.

**accord or accordance** If a thing is in **accord** with something else, it is in agreement with it: *The contract is in full accord with company policy* (it agrees with it). If a thing is in **accordance** with something else, it obeys or follows it: *The contract was drawn up in accordance with your instructions* (as you directed).

**accrue** This is sometimes used to mean simply 'grow' or 'increase'. It actually means 'to grow or increase by regular increments'; interest *accrues* in a bank account as amounts are added to it at set intervals.

**accusative case** The case of a noun or pronoun that is the object of a verb or is governed by a preposition. *Me, him, her, us, and them* are the accusative forms of the pronouns *I, he, she, we, and they*.

**acknowledgement or acknowledgment** This word can be spelled either way.

**acronym** A word formed from the initial letters and/or syllables of other words, intended as a pronounceable abbreviation; for example *NATO* (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and *radar* (radio detecting and ranging). See  $\diamond$  abbreviations.

**active** The form of a verb where the subject of the sentence performs the action: *Alan caught the dog* (rather than *The dog was caught by Alan*). See also  $\diamond$  passive.

**actually** This can be used for emphasis or to express indignation: *He actually called me a liar*. It is also used instead of *really*: *He may seem a*

*bit simple, but actually he's quite shrewd.* Avoid using it unnecessarily where no emphasis is called for: *Actually, I've never met the Queen.*

**acumen or acuity** **Acumen** is the ability to understand or appreciate things quickly and clearly: *To become an MP it helps to have political acumen.* **Acuity** is sharpness or keenness of thought or of the senses: *The hawk has great acuity of sight.*

**adjacent or adjoining** If one thing is **adjacent** to another, it is next to it without necessarily making physical contact: *The car park was adjacent to the sports hall.* An **adjoining** object, however, has a common point of contact with another: *The offices are to the left, with a canteen adjoining.*

**adjective** This is a grammatical part of speech for words that describe nouns (for example, new and beautiful, as in *a new hat* and *a beautiful day*). Adjectives generally have three degrees (grades or levels for the description of relationships): the positive degree: *new, beautiful*, the comparative degree: *newer, more beautiful*, and the superlative degree: *newest, most beautiful*.

Some adjectives do not normally need comparative and superlative forms; one person cannot be *more asleep* than someone else, a lone action is unlikely to be *the most single-handed action ever seen*, and many people dislike the expression *most unique* or *almost unique*, because something unique is supposed to be the only one that exists. For purposes of emphasis or style these conventions may be set aside: *I don't know who is more unique; they are both remarkable people.*

Double comparatives such as *more bigger* are not grammatical in Standard English, but Shakespeare used a double superlative: '*the most unkindest cut of all*' (*Julius Caesar*). Some adjectives may have both comparative and both superlative forms *commoner and more common; commonest and most common*; shorter words usually take on the suffixes *-er/-est* but occasionally they may be given the *more/most* forms for emphasis or other reasons: *Which of them is the most clear?*

When an adjective comes before a noun it is attributive; when it comes after noun and verb (for example, *It looks good*) it is predicative. Some adjectives can only be used predicatively: *The child was asleep,*



but not: *the asleep child*. The participles of verbs are regularly used adjectivally: *a sleeping child, boiled milk*, often in compound forms: *a quick-acting medicine, a glass-making factory, a hard-boiled egg, well-trained teachers*. Adjectives are often formed by adding suffixes to nouns: *sand: sandy, nation: national*.

**adjoining** See ⚭adjacent.

**admirable** The standard pronunciation is with the stress on the first syllable [add-mruh-ble].

**admit** It used to be considered incorrect to use *to* after *admit* in the sense 'confess', but it is now widely accepted when referring to an action: *he admitted the crime* or *he admitted to the crime*. *To* should be avoided when referring to a quality or when *admit* is followed by a verb: *she admitted her guilt; I admit lying about this matter*.

**adverb** This is a grammatical part of speech for words that modify or describe verbs: *she ran quickly*, adjectives: *a beautifully clear day*, and adverbs: *they did it really well*. Most adverbs are formed from adjectives or past participles by adding *-ly*: *quick: quickly* or *-ally*: *automatic: automatically*.

Sometimes adverbs are formed by adding *-wise* as in *moving clockwise*; (in the phrase *a clockwise direction*, *clockwise* is an adjective). Some adverbs have a distinct form from their partnering adjective, for example, *good/well*: *it was good work; they did it well*. Others do not derive from adjectives, for example *very*, in *very nice*; *tomorrow*, in *I'll do it tomorrow*. Some are unadapted adjectives, for example *pretty*, as in *It's pretty good*. Sentence adverbs modify whole sentences or phrases: *Generally, it rains a lot here; Usually, the town is busy at this time of year*.

Adverbs are divided into four types, depending on whether they express manner, degree, time, or place. Overuse of adverbs should be avoided. For example, in the sentence *He swiped wildly and the ball whizzed quickly*, the adverbs are redundant, since the verbs contain their meanings already. See also ⚭tautology.

**adversary** The standard British pronunciation is with the stress on the first syllable [add-vuh-sree]. The US pronunciation also has the stress

on the first syllable, but both *rs* are pronounced, and the end is pronounced [serry] to rhyme with *sherry*.

**aesthetic or ascetic** Aesthetic relates to what is beautiful or artistic: *The architect designed the shopping mall with both aesthetic and practical considerations in mind.* Ascetic relates to abstinence from worldly pleasures or creature comforts, often with the aim of spiritual gain: *As a non-smoker and teetotaler he leads a very ascetic life.*

**affect or effect** To affect something is to have an effect on it: *Smoking can affect your health.* To effect something is to make it happen: *The doctor's treatment effected an immediate improvement in the patient's health.* Affect is often used instead of effect, so take care when you are writing.

**ageing or aging** This word can be spelled either way, although ageing is more common.

**aggravate** The main meaning of this word is 'make worse': *Such remarks only serve to aggravate the situation.* It is also commonly used to mean 'annoy' or 'exasperate': *It really aggravates me the way you always interrupt.* Although this second use dates back to the 16th century, some people still disapprove of it.

**aging** See *ageing*.

**agnostic or atheist** An agnostic is someone who holds that it is impossible to know whether there is a God or not. An atheist holds that there is no God. The word *agnostic* was invented by the 19th-century biologist T H Huxley.

**agreement** In grammar, the harmony whereby parts of a sentence agree in number, gender, and case. The form of a verb depends on the nature of its grammatical subject. This can vary in two basic ways: number – it can be singular or plural; and person – it can be first person, second person or third person. To find out more about these, look at the entries for *number* and *person*.

**aisle** The *s* is silent, and the word rhymes with *smile*.

**alias or alibi** An **alias** is a false name, not a false description or personation: *His real name was John Smith but he ran his business under the alias of Joe Bloggs.* An **alibi** is properly a statement that a person was somewhere else at the time a crime was committed: *His alibi was supported by his sister, who had been visiting him that evening.* It can also be used of a general excuse: *My alibi is that the train was late.* However, this is thought unacceptable by some people.

**allay, alleviate, or assuage** To **allay** something is to make it less or get rid of it altogether: *She allayed my fears by saying that she also had heard nothing; I want to allay any doubts you may have about this.* To **alleviate** is to relieve something unpleasant or painful by making it less severe: *The ointment soon alleviated the discomfort; Volunteer workers did their best to alleviate the situation.* To **assuage** is similar, but is mainly used of unpleasant emotions or bodily sensations: *I tried to assuage the old man's terror; The crew were desperate to assuage their fearful thirst.*

**alleviate** See  $\diamond$ allay.

**all right or alright** *The answers are all right* may mean that all of them are correct or that they are satisfactory on the whole. Some people would like to use **alright** to avoid confusion, but **all right** is considered correct. It is possible that *alright* will one day be accepted (as *already* and *altogether* have been), but for now it is better to rewrite the sentence: *All the answers are right* or *The answers are satisfactory.*

**alternately or alternatively** **Alternately** means 'one after another, by turns': *We worked and rested alternately.* **Alternatively** means 'instead of that': *We could walk. Alternatively, we could go by bus.*

**alternative** Some people feel that, because it is derived from the Latin *alter*, meaning 'one or the other of two', **alternative** should be used only when the choice is between two things or courses of action. But **alternative** and **alternatively** can be used with more than two: *There are several alternatives; Come to lunch. Alternatively, I could come to your house, or we could meet somewhere.*

**alternatively** See  $\diamond$ alternately.

**aluminium** US spelling: *aluminum*.

**ambiguous or ambivalent** If something is **ambiguous** it has more than one possible meaning, and so is obscure or difficult to understand: *When I asked Stuart if he condemned my action he gave me an ambiguous answer; The message was perfectly clear and not in the least ambiguous.* If a person is **ambivalent** they have an uncertain attitude or feeling towards someone or something: *The French are ambivalent about royalty: they abolished their own monarchy but are very interested in the British royal family.* A common error is to use *ambivalent* instead of *ambiguous*.

**amen** The standard pronunciation in Britain is [ah-men], although Roman Catholics tend to favour a pronunciation in which the first syllable rhymes with *day*. In the USA this is the usual pronunciation, but [ah-men] is used in singing.

**amend or emend** To **amend** something is to alter it, usually for the better: *The referee amended certain rules to make it easier for the new players.* To **emend** something is to correct it, especially a printed text: *The editor emended the text, which was full of errors.*

**America** This is used rather loosely with several different meanings. It can refer to the USA or to the USA and Canada, or to the whole land mass of North, South, and Central America. It is best to be precise: use *United States*, *US*, or *USA* (*the States* is acceptable in informal speech), *North America* for the USA and Canada, *Central America* for the area from Mexico to Panama, *South America* for the continent to the south, and *the Americas* for the whole lot. **American** is the only adjective available to describe someone or something from the USA; be careful to make it clear if you are referring to some other part of the Americas.

**American English** In July 1994 a British MP proposed in the House of Commons a bill banning the use in English of words borrowed from French. There was laughter in the House as he spelled out the implications: no more croissants or baguettes, no hors d'œuvres, no visits to cafés or brasseries; in fact, no restaurants. No more rendez-vous, affaires, or ménages à trois.