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OF CURRENT
ENGLISH**

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The content and arrangement of the entries

Compilers and printers of a dictionary have the problem of setting out a mass of detailed text clearly and economically. The use of too many abbreviations and symbols may make reference difficult but some are necessary in order to save valuable space. The user of this dictionary will benefit if he familiarizes himself with the notes that follow.

The headword The headword is printed in **bold type** and is positioned to the left of the column of text. The headword, together with its article (including definitions, derivatives, pronunciations, examples of usage, etc) is called an *entry*. The entries in the dictionary are listed in alphabetic order regardless of whether the headword is printed as a single word, is hyphenated or is two or more separate words. A headword may be used as more than one part of speech each of which needs a long or complicated entry. Or a headword may have the same spelling as another but have **unrelated meanings**, sometimes with different pronunciations. In all these cases, the entries are listed separately with raised numbers after the headwords.

Examples

any ¹	bear ¹	row ¹	rebel ¹
any ²	bear ²	row ²	rebel ²
any ³		row ³	

If a headword has more than one spelling these are both given, separated by a comma.

Examples

gaol, jail
hic-cup, hic-cough

If there is an American English variant, or a British variant that is more common in American English, this is given in parentheses after the first spelling.

Examples

de-fence (US = **de-fense**)
ar-chae-ol-ogy (also **ar-che-ol-**)

If an alternative spelling belongs to another place in the alphabetic order of the headwords which is more than a page away from the entry, it is repeated in its alphabetic position with a cross-reference to the main entry.

Examples

en-quire ⇔ **inquire**
es-thetic ⇔ **aesthetic**

The boxes When a headword functions as two parts of speech and both are related and can be dealt with conveniently together, there is only one entry. The change from one part of speech to another is indicated by a square box □.

Examples

ap-peal as a *verb* and a *noun*
as-so-ci-ate as an *adjective* and a *noun*
at-tack as a *noun* and a *verb*

When a derivative in an article functions as two parts of speech the change from one part of speech to another is indicated by a smaller box □.

Example

at **al-co-hol**: **al-co-holic** as an *adjective* and a *noun*.

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Derivatives, compounds and idiomatic expressions A derivative is a word formed by the headword and a suffix. A compound is a combination of the headword and another word (written as one word, two separate words or separated by a hyphen). An idiom is the use of the headword in a phrase which must be learnt as a group, or the headword used idiomatically with an adverbial particle or preposition.

Derivatives, compounds and idiomatic expressions are printed in bold type.

Examples

bit-ter

a) a compound; ' ~ -**sweet**

b) idioms: **a ~ pill to swallow**; **to the ~ end**

c) derivatives: ~**ly** ~**ness**

Note the typographical distinctions used: derivatives and compounds are in ordinary bold type; idiomatic expressions are in **bold italic** type.

Derivatives in *-able*, *-ly*, *-ment*, *-ness*, etc are not entered as separate headwords unless a separate article is useful. The adverb *hardly* is entered as a headword because it has little relevance to the adjective and adverb *hard*. 'He hardly worked' does not mean 'He worked hard'.

Phonetic information is given for derivatives wherever doubt might occur. In the case of compounds, stress is indicated. Stress is also shown in idiomatic expressions where the stress is not predictable. If there is a shift of stress which results in a change in pronunciation (usually of the vowel or vowels) a phonetic transcription of the derivative or necessary part is provided.

Example

adore /ə'dɔ:(r)/ *v* **ador-ation** /'ædə'reɪʃn/ *n*

A phonetic transcription is also given where the derivative contains a suffix which has more than one pronunciation or where the user may be uncertain of the pronunciation of the derivative.

Examples

bore² /bɔ:(r)/ *v*; ~**dom** /-dəm/ *n*

bother /'bɒðə(r)/ *v*; ~**some** /-səm/ *adj*

con-tract² /kən'trækt/ *v*; **con-trac-tor** /-tɔ:(r)/ *n*

See the article on pronunciation and stress on pp xii-xv of this Introduction for a full explanation with examples.

Hyphenation For many compounds there is no agreement about the use or non-use of hyphens. Many, long established and familiar, are accepted as single words, for example *blackbird*, *breakthrough*. Many which were formerly written with a hyphen are now often written without one, for example *aircraft*, *breadcrumb*, *cornerstone*. Others are still most frequently written with a hyphen, for example *motor-vehicle*, *apple-pie*, *age-group*, and others are usually written as separate words, for example *contact lens*, *bank holiday*, *grass widow*. When there is no general agreement, a compound may appear in different styles, for example *headmaster*, *head-master* and *head master*. Choice of style depends on an editor's or writer's decision on usage or on the decision of a printing house. There are differences between British and American usage. The important point is, having decided on a written style for a compound, to be consistent.

Pronunciation Each headword is followed by a full phonetic transcription inside slanted strokes /—/. Transcriptions are also given for all derivatives which are not completely regular and/or predictable, and stress is indicated for compounds, idiomatic expressions and in the example phrases and sentences where any uncertainty might be possible. See pp xii–xv of this Introduction for details.

The definitions The various senses of a headword are marked off by numerals in bold type **1, 2, 3**, etc. If a compound, idiomatic expression or phrasal verb has more than one meaning, each is introduced by a letter in bold type: **(a), (b), (c)**, etc.

Examples

battle - **battle-axe** has two meanings.

bear² - **bear oneself** has two meanings.

be-lieve - **believe in** has three meanings.

Example phrases and sentences These are a very important part of the text and follow the definitions in *italic* type. These examples are included to demonstrate the position of the headword or derivative in sentence patterns. They also indicate the kinds of style and context in which the headword or derivative may be used. If the example phrase or sentence is accompanied by notes or an explanation this is shown in ordinary type, in parentheses if it occurs within the example or, if at the end, preceded by a comma and not usually in parentheses.

These phrases and sentences illustrate everyday informal English unless the context is a formal one. Wherever such information is useful, stress is indicated.

The Tilde When a headword of more than three letters is repeated in an article, for example in illustrative phrases and sentences, a tilde ~ replaces the letters of the headword in order to save space. Thus at *elevate* the example *an ~d railway* is to be read as *an elevated railway*. A bold tilde **~** is also used to replace the headword in derivatives, idiomatic expressions and compounds.

Examples

care¹

take ~ of **~taker**

~ of **~free**

take into ~ **~worn**

If the headword is used in a derivative which is spelt with a capital letter this is shown by putting the first letter in its capital form before the tilde.

Example

care¹

Child C~ Officer

When the tilde is used in illustrative sentences and phrases it does not necessarily follow the indications for word-division shown in the printed headword or derivative. In particular, the tilde may be followed by 's' in a plural form or 'd' or 'ed' in a past tense form. For guidance on word-division, choose from the breaks offered in the printed headword or derivative. Do not use the tilde as a guide.

The use of the slanted stroke / The slanted stroke / between two words or phrases in an idiomatic expression, example sentence or phrase, and occasionally in a definition,

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indicates that they are alternatives. For example, at **by²** there is *by accident/mistake* indicating the alternative expressions *by accident* and *by mistake*. *by/land/sea/air* gives three alternatives, *by land*, *by sea*, *by air*. Words in parentheses () in idiomatic expressions indicate a wider choice of words which are likely to occur but which are not an essential part of the expression.

Nouns: singular and plural

There are some language problems which are adequately treated neither in dictionaries nor in the majority of textbooks on grammar. For those to whom English is a foreign language the problem of whether (and when) a noun may be used in the plural is often difficult. In some languages little or no distinction is made between singular and plural. In other languages nouns that may have plural forms (as French *nouvelles*) are, in English, used only in the singular (as English *news*).

In order to help the student of English to avoid such errors as *interesting informations*, *useful advices*, *an interesting news*, *a valuable furniture*, indications are supplied in this dictionary with most noun entries. These show which nouns, and which semantic varieties of nouns, may be used in the plural, and which may not, except with a change or extension of meaning. If a noun entry is followed by [C], or if [C] is placed after one of the numerals marking semantic varieties, it is a noun standing for something that may be counted. It may, therefore, be used with the indefinite article, or with *many*, numerals, and the plural form. If [U] is used, the noun stands for something (a material, quality, abstraction, etc) that cannot be counted, though it may be measured. Such a noun is not normally used with the indefinite article and has no plural form.

Difficulty may be taken as an example. Definition 1 is marked [U] and there are examples to illustrate its use: *with difficulty*; *without any/much difficulty*. Definition 2 is marked [C], with examples of the plural: *to raise difficulties*, *If you knew the difficulties I'm in!*

Irregular plurals, conjugations, etc

Irregular (and sometimes semi-irregular) plurals, conjugations, etc are included in parentheses immediately after the part of speech in an entry. Phonetic information is also provided where necessary.

Examples

bac-terium /bæk'tɪərɪəm/ n (pl -ria /-rɪə/)

baby /'beɪbɪ/ n (pl -bies)

axis /'æksɪs/ n (pl axes /'æksɪz/)

choose /tʃuːz/ vt,vi (pt chose /tʃəʊz/, pp chosen /tʃəʊzən/)

ap-ply /ə'plɑɪ/ vt,vi (pt -lied)

When the final consonant of a word is doubled, most frequently when conjugating verbs, this is also given after the part of speech.

Examples

chop¹ /tʃɒp/ vt,vi (-pp-)

bar² /bɑ(r)/ vt (-rr-)

American English does not follow the British English form of doubling consonants in certain words, particularly those ending in 'l'. In these cases both the British and American forms are given.

Examples

kid-nap vt (-pp-, US: -p-)

level² vt,vi (-ll-, US: -l-)

Comparative and superlative

These forms are given after the part of speech.

Examples

ample /æmpl/ *adj* (-r, -est)

cold /kəʊld/ *adj* (-er, -est)

pretty /prɪti/ *adj* (-ier, -iest)

Such indications must not be taken as rules. The use of *more* or *most* is equally possible in many cases, the choice being dependent on context. 'The most lively and intelligent girl at the party' may be preferred to a mixture of two styles ('The liveliest and most intelligent girl at the party').

Entries for major verbs

Entries for such verbs as *be, bring, come, get, make, send, sit* and *work* tend to be long and complex, partly because of the range of distinct meanings expressed by each of them, partly because of the ease with which they combine with other words to form special expressions, many of them highly idiomatic. Both of these features are taken into account in the organization of the entries for major, or 'basic' verbs.

Example sit

The standard arrangement of the main senses and special uses is as follows:

The principal meanings of **sit** are treated separately in a series of numbered sections (1 to 7), the more literal senses being given first and the more figurative later. Each section contains, in order:

1 a reference, in square brackets [], to the Verb Pattern(s) appropriate to the meaning in question;

2 the definition;

3 one or more illustrative phrases or sentences.

e.g 7 [VP2C] (of clothes) *suit, fit, hang: That dress sits well/loosely.*

The verb patterns, which are set out in tabular form on pp xvi-xxvii, should be carefully noted, as an important difference in meaning often corresponds to a difference in the verb pattern.

The definition may contain, within parentheses, notes commonly associated with the verb in the sense indicated:

3 ... (of Parliament, a law court, a committee, etc) *hold meetings*

4 ... *keep one's seat on (a horse etc)*

5 ... (of birds) *perch*

Fixed expressions containing **sit** and a *noun* or *adjective* are printed in **bold italic** type. They are placed in sections according to the 'literal' meanings and grammatical patterns to which they most closely correspond, and are listed alphabetically according to the first letter of the *n* (or *adj*):

1 ... *take or be in a position in which the body is upright and supported...*

The child is not big enough to sit at table yet. sit to an artist, ...

sit for an examination, ... sit for one's portrait, ... sit tight. ...

When an entry for the verb contains a number of fixed phrases, all of one pattern (e.g *verb + noun*) which are not clearly related to any meaning of the *verb* alone, the expressions are grouped together and placed in a separate section.

Compounds which include a *non-finite* form of **sit** are placed after the finite uses to which they are closest in meaning:

sit for (a borough, etc) represent it in Parliament. Hence, *the sitting member*, the candidate ... who held the seat before the dissolution of Parliament.

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5 ... (of birds) perch: *sitting on a branch*. **sitting duck**, an easy target or victim.

Compounds which are not related in meaning to any *finite* use of **sit** are placed with other compounds which they resemble in form. Thus **sitting tenant**, though unrelated in meaning to **sitting duck**, is placed after it because the two compounds have the same form (*present participle + noun*).

Special, i.e. figurative or idiomatic, uses of **sit** with *adverbial particles* and *prepositions* are dealt with in a separate section at the end of the entry (section 8). The different combinations of **sit + adverbial particle** or **sit + preposition** are alphabetically arranged according to the initial letter of the *particle* or *preposition*.

Expressions containing both a *particle* and a *preposition* (or a *particle* and other additional words) follow the simpler combinations:

sit down, ... **sit-down strike**, ... **sit down under** (insults etc), ...
sit in, ... **sit in on sth**, ...

The difference between *particle* and *prepositional* uses of *down*, *in*, *off*, etc is indicated by varying the form printed in bold type, as follows: when *down* (etc) is a *particle*, the abbreviated pronouns 'sb' and 'sth' are not placed after it:

sit down, ... **sit in**, ... **sit sth out**, ... **sit (sb) up**, ...

when *down* (etc) is a *preposition*, it is followed by 'sb' or 'sth' (occasionally by both 'sb' and 'sth'):

sit in on sth, ... **sit on sth**, ... **sit (up) on sb**, ...

The difference between the intransitive and transitive uses of **sit** is also shown by varying the bold-face form. Nothing appears between **sit** and its *particle* (or *preposition*) when the verb is *intransitive*:

sit back, ... **sit down**, ... **sit in on sth**, ... **sit (up) on sth**.

'sb' or 'sth' is placed between **sit** and the *particle* (or *preposition*) when it is used *transitively*:

sit sth out, ...

Occasionally a *verb + particle*, etc in a particular sense may be either transitive or intransitive. In such cases the *pronoun* is inserted in parentheses:

sit (sb) up, ...

Nouns formed from *sit + particle* are placed after the particular expression from which they are derived:

sit in, (of workers students, etc) demonstrate by occupying a building ...
Hence, **^sit-in n** such a demonstration.

Adverbial particles

The term *adverbial particle* is used to designate an adverb of a particular class differing in many ways from other adverbs. In most cases these adverbs (e.g. *about*, *by*, *down*, *in*, *off*, *on*, *over*, *round*; *through*, *up*) are also used as prepositions.

They are important because, as described above, they enter into combinations with verbs to form collocations such as *blow up* (explode), *leave off* (stop), *go on* (continue), *give in* (yield), *give up* (abandon), *make out* (understand).

Another important feature of the adverbial particles is their position in the sentence. The following points should be well known to all learners who wish to write good English.

1 When there is no direct object in the sentence, the adverbial particle follows the verb immediately.

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eg *Come in. Don't give up, whatever happens.*

2 When there is a direct object which is a personal pronoun, the adverbial particle is placed after, not before, the personal pronoun.

eg *I can't make it out. Put them on. Throw him out.*

3 When there is a direct object which is not a personal pronoun, the adverbial particle may be placed either before or after the direct object.

eg *Put your coat on. He put on his coat.*

In sentences where the direct object is long (eg when it is a noun clause), it is preferable to place the adverbial particle with the verb, and before the direct object.

eg *He gave away every book that he possessed.*

(cf *He gave his books away.*)

4 The adverbial particles may be placed at the beginning of exclamatory sentences.

eg *In you go! Away they went! Off went John!*

Note that in sentences of this kind subject and verb are inverted if the subject is a noun but not inverted if the subject is a personal pronoun.

5 The adverbial particles are compounded with the preposition *with* in verbless exclamations.

eg *Down with work! Up with the Republic! Off with his head! Away with him!*

Anomalous Verbs

Some of the verb entries in this dictionary are followed by *anom fin*, short for *anomalous finite*. The anomalous verbs and their finites are set out in the table below.

	Non-finite forms			Finite forms	
	Infinitive	Present Participle	Past Participle	Present Tense	Past Tense [→]
1	<i>be</i>	<i>being</i>	<i>been</i>	<i>am, is, are</i>	<i>was, were</i>
2	<i>have</i>	<i>having</i>	<i>had</i>	<i>have, has</i>	<i>had</i>
3	<i>do</i>	<i>doing</i>	<i>done</i>	<i>do, does</i>	<i>did</i>
4	—	—	—	<i>shall</i>	<i>should</i>
5	—	—	—	<i>will</i>	<i>would</i>
6	—	—	—	<i>can</i>	<i>could</i>
7	—	—	—	<i>may</i>	<i>might</i>
8	—	—	—	<i>must</i>	—
9	—	—	—	<i>ought</i>	—
10	—	—	—	<i>need</i>	—
11	—	—	—	<i>dare</i>	—
12	—	—	—	—	<i>used</i>

The 24 finite forms on the right-hand side of this table are important in English syntax. The grammar mechanisms of Affirmation, Negation and Interrogation cannot clearly be explained without reference to them.

Negative

The negative sentence is made by placing the adverb *not* after the anomalous finite.

Thus, *I am* → *I am not*; *you can* → *you cannot*; *they ought* → *they ought not*. If an affirmative sentence contains no anomalous finite, the non-anomalous finite must first be replaced by using the corresponding

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expanded tense, thus introducing *do*, *does*, or *did* (anomalous finites).
Thus, *I go* → *I do go* → *I do not go*; *he went* → *he did go* → *he did not go*.

Interrogative The chief mechanism for expressing the formal interrogative in modern English (and many European languages) is inversion of subject and finite.

Thus, *I am* → *am I?*; *you ought* → *ought you?*; *they must* → *must they?*

In modern English only the anomalous finites are normally inverted with the subject to form the interrogative. (*Went you* is archaic or biblical, and such constructions as '*Yes*', *said he* are exceptional.) If an affirmative sentence contains no anomalous finite, the procedure described above for the negative is followed.

Thus, *he comes* → *he does come* → *does he come?*; *they came* → *they did come* → *did they come?*

Other examples of subject and finite inversion (always with one of the 24 anomalous finites) may be seen in sentences which contain a front-shifted adverbial.

eg Not only *did they* expect us but . . .

In no other way *can the matter* be explained.

Never before *have I* heard such fine singing.

The 24 anomalous finites are used to avoid repetition. This is seen clearly in answers to questions requiring a *yes* or *no* in the answer, and answers in which the subject is the essential part.

eg Have you read that book? Yes, I *have*. (Instead of *have read that book*.)

Shall you be seeing him soon? Yes, I *shall*. (Instead of *shall be seeing him soon*.)

Who discovered America? Columbus *did*. (Instead of *discovered America*.)

The 24 anomalous finites are used in other ways, eg

a) In Disjunctive Questions:

You can't come, *can you?*

You can come, *can't you?*

He arrived late, *didn't he?*

b) In constructions expressing *also* and *also not*:

I can go there and so *can you*.

I went there and so *did you*.

I can't go; nor *can you*.

I didn't go; nor *did you*.

c) In comments which confirm or contradict:

You told us that yesterday. . . Oh, yes, so I *did!*

Why didn't you tell us that yesterday? . . . But I *did!*

For a further description of the functions of these finites, the reader may consult *A Guide to Patterns and Usage in English*.

American English American English variants are always preceded by 'US'. American spellings follow the British forms in parentheses.

Examples

centre (US = **center**); **flavour** (US = **-vor**); **dialogue** (US also **dia-log**) (meaning the British spelling is also used). American meanings or comments on American usage are preceded by (US), (US sl), (esp US), etc.

Examples

check-ers (US) = draughts.

sure . . . **3** (colloq, esp US) certainly

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When the word or phrase is British English and rarely used in American English (GB) is placed before the definition. For examples see the entry for *flat*'.

American pronunciation is also given alongside the British English forms. For details and examples, see p xii of this Introduction.

Cross-references An arrow (⇒) is used to indicate a reference to another part of the dictionary. This may be to another entry, in which case the arrow is followed by its headword, for example ⇒ neck (in the entry for *breathe*). If the headword is numbered, this is included in the reference, for example ⇒ bat' (in *belfry*). If the reference is to a particular definition, the definition number is also given, for example ⇒ one³(3) at *another* which means 'look at the third entry for the word *one*, definition three'. If the reference is to a derivative the formula ⇒ (the named derivative in *italics*) at (the headword) is used, for example ⇒ *cast*~ at *cast*'(3).

The same arrow is used to indicate references to illustrations. These occur fairly frequently since there are many labels on some illustrations, particularly those grouped thematically, which have cross-references from the dictionary entry to the illustration. The formula used is '⇒ the illus at . . .', for example '⇒ the illus at *insect*' is given at the entry for *ant*.

There are occasional references to the appendices of the dictionary, to Shakespeare's plays or to the books of the Bible. These follow a similar pattern, for example ⇒ App 4; ⇒ *Mor of Ven*; ⇒ Exod 8 : 3. Abbreviations used are those given in the relevant appendix of this dictionary.

The illustrations Illustrations can often define or describe vocabulary more easily and more economically than words. Illustrations have been used in the dictionary wherever they make a useful contribution to the text. There are photographs of scenes, buildings, artifacts, life-like sketches of the natural world and line drawings of mathematical shapes, technological diagrams and simple everyday objects. Many illustrations have been grouped under lexical subjects or themes (animals, bridges, tools, etc) and the careful labelling of individual parts (eg at skeleton, domestic animals, etc) increases their educational value.

Word-division In all types of English, handwritten, typewritten and printed, it is common practice to divide words when they require more space than is left at the end of a line. This division is indicated by adding a hyphen (-) immediately after the incomplete portion at the end of the line.

The rules which decide where a word may be divided vary considerably. In handwriting and typewriting many people avoid word-division altogether. The broad basis for the decision is syllabification but other considerations, such as derivation and intelligibility of either part of the divided word, play a part.

The headwords and derivatives in the dictionary include indications of where a word may be divided. These are shown by a bold dot (.) within the printed word. A word of one syllable should not be divided. Word division is not recommended for syllables of one letter at the beginning or end of a word, for example *apart*, *above*, *windy*, *bloody*. In short words such as *city*, *aura* no break is recommended. No division is indicated for *-ed* in the past tense or participle whether or not these are syllables, for example *walked*, *charged*, *wanted*, *invented*. Word division is not recommended within suffixes as *-able*, *-ible*; *-ably*, *-ibly*.

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Thus **bear-able**, **in-cred-ibly** are given, *not* bear-a-ble, in-cred-i-bly. In general, word division should be avoided when only two letters are left after the break. The suffix *-ly* is an exception because it does not affect the intelligibility or pronunciation of the first part of the divided word when carried over to the next line (unless it is part of a longer suffix such as *-cally*, when a division at *-ly* is not recommended). Division after the first two letters of a word is acceptable, particularly by printers, and is therefore indicated in this dictionary though it is usually avoided in handwriting.

If a headword or derivative is normally written with a hyphen, the hyphen is shown, as in *never-ending*, *anti-hero*. Word division may be indicated elsewhere in these compounds but a break at the existing hyphen is to be preferred.

Sometimes a *tilde* is used in a derivative in the text. If word-division is permissible before the letters following the tilde, it is indicated, for example *~able*, *~ly*, *~ment*. When no break is recommended no dot is shown, for example *~ed*, *~s*, *~al*.

Example

as-ton-ish indicates the following possible divisions:

as- aston-
tonish (or) -ish

The second example is to be preferred.

Its derivatives are shown as

~ed where no break is recommended before *-ed*.

~ment where a division is permissible before the suffix *-ment*. Thus

astonish-
ment

Stylistic values and registers of specialist English usage

It is difficult for anyone learning English as a foreign language to know the stylistic context of the words. An error of judgement may result in the use of a pedantic, literary style in everyday conversation or slang in a formal context. It would help if these could all be indicated in dictionaries. It is possible to label some words as archaic, obsolete, formal, slang, poetic, colloquial, dated, humorous, obscene, etc. It is also possible to indicate the contexts or *registers* in which particular words are likely to occur, for example in art, law, commerce, sport, journalism, science, etc. Such indications are given in this dictionary and a list of the stylistic values and specialist English registers used is provided inside the front and back covers of the book.

There are thousands of words which cannot easily be labelled in these ways. These are the words which have their place in what is called the *active* vocabulary. They are the words and phrases which must be used correctly and fluently, without doubt or hesitation. There are thousands of words which need to be known but which need not be used or which are unlikely to be used. These are the words which have their place in what is called the *passive* vocabulary.

Commence is a word which needs to be known but *begin* or *start* are the more usual words in an active vocabulary. *Commence* is more formal and is part of a passive vocabulary. In the fiction of the 18th or 19th centuries, the verbs *court* and *woo* may occur. It is not usual today to speak of a girl being *wooed* or *courted*; such words are dated. However, they need to be known. They may still be heard in a broadcast on English literature; they may be used humorously; they may have a modern extension of meaning, as when parliamentary candidates are said to *woo the voters* before an election.

Colloquial and slang words present particular problems. The word

lousy has a colloquial meaning. In colloquial style it is permissible to speak of 'lousy weather' or a 'lousy dinner' but it would be abusive to use it about a person, except perhaps in the colloquial meaning of being 'well-provided with something', for example 'He's lousy with money'.

Nothing dates more quickly than slang. *Flapper* was used in the early years of this century to describe a girl in her teens. It is not used today. Words such as *bird* or *chick* which were current a few years ago are now better avoided. Most girls will not be pleased to be called by these names today. To use slang which is out of date, or to use it in an unsuitable situation, is to betray oneself as being far from competent in English. A word or phrase in the dictionary labelled as colloquial, slang, modern slang, etc should therefore be used with caution. Unless there is complete confidence about the meaning of the word or expression, that it is in current usage and that it will not offend the company in which it is to be used, it should not be used. There are some slang words and phrases which may be considered coarse or vulgar. *Bloody* is not slang in such phrases as 'a murderer's bloody hands'. It is slang in such phrases as 'a bloody idiot', 'a bloody nuisance', 'a bloody marvellous film'. Some uses of *bloody* as a slang word will not offend most people today, as in the last example. Other slang uses may be considered by many people as coarse or vulgar.

Some words and phrases in this dictionary have the sign Δ . These are taboo words which may be met, particularly in contemporary prose and drama, but which it is best not to use. The likelihood is that you will cause consternation. These words were never heard outside extremely vulgar contexts unless used in a meaningless sense in coarse colloquial style. There used to be a ban on the use of such words, particularly in print or on radio and television. Today the ban has been lifted and these words are often heard or seen. This does not mean that their use has become generally acceptable. The foreign learner of English may need to understand them but will do well to avoid using them, especially in conversation.

Definition of obscene words is simple if restricted to meaning and this dictionary has defined the common taboo words. However, they are widely used with no reference to their lexical context and these uses are difficult to explain. Those who have English as their first language do not need such explanations since such uses are often a meaningless habit. There are some obscene words which are also considered to be more obscene than others but such differences of acceptance are also difficult to explain. Examples may help the foreign learner:

- 1 *What are you doing?*
- 2 *Whatever are you doing?*
- 3 *What on earth/in the world are you doing?*
- 4 *What the hell are you doing?*
- 5 *What the bloody hell are you doing?*
- 6 *What the sodding hell are you doing?*
- 7 *What the fucking hell are you doing?*

1 is a simple unemotive question; 2 and 3 are more emphatic; 4 and 5 are progressively more emphatic or intense, and 5 is already offensive to many people; 6 and 7 will offend most people. *Sodding* and *fucking* are obscene here but meaningless since those who use these words in this way do so with no thought of the lexical meaning of the word.

Other words having the sign Δ are those which are offensive to a particular class or race, for example *nigger*. These are to be avoided.

Pronunciation and stress

This dictionary is arranged in paragraphs each of which begins with a headword. For every one of these headwords a full pronunciation is given using phonetic symbols from the authorised alphabet of the International Phonetic Association. A complete list of these symbols, with explanatory keywords, is given on the inside covers of the dictionary for easy reference. Each keyword displays the most usual spelling for the sound it represents.

Many English words have more than one common pronunciation. The pronunciations we have selected are those which research has suggested are the most common ones or, occasionally, the most suitable from other considerations for adoption by those whose mother tongue is not English.

Varieties of pronunciation

In most cases the pronunciation shown is equally suitable for use with speakers from any part of the English speaking world but, where this is not so, a choice of two forms is given, one representing the best known variety of British English the other the best known variety of American English. These varieties of English pronunciation are the only two which have been adopted widely for the purposes of teaching English as a foreign or second language. One of them is known as General American; the other may be conveniently termed General British (abbreviated to 'GA' and 'GB' in these notes). In its own country each of them is the variety of English most associated with national broadcasting and least restricted in its geographical distribution.

American pronunciation

The General American pronunciations are preceded by the abbreviation *US*: (US is used to identify all specifically American usages in this dictionary). The GA pronunciation is not given separately when the only difference between GA and GB would be the American use of that 'r' which is never sounded by GB speakers. Users of GA are recommended to sound the letter 'r' wherever it occurs in the ordinary spelling of all words whether or not it is given in our transcription.

Thus at the entries *arm* and *quarter*, where the transcriptions /ɑ:m/ and /ˈkwɔ:tə(r)/ only will be found, users of GA are expected to understand that they are recommended to adopt the pronunciations /ɑ:rm/ and /ˈkwɔ:tə:/. It will be noticed that the symbol /ə/ is to be interpreted by GA users as a sound very similar to /ər/ but usually longer and associated with stress. For GB speakers it represents a sound with no r-quality of its own. Thus *hurry* in its GA pronunciation has no /r/ in its transcription. (The GB form of the word is shown as /ˈhʌrɪ/, the GA form as /ˈhʌrɪ./) An /r/ is shown in the transcription of a few words which is superfluous for GA users but has to go into the common version for the benefit of GB users, e.g. in *furrry* /ˈfɜ:rɪ/, *currish* /ˈkɜ:ɪʃ/.

Separate GB and GA pronunciations will be found at entries such as:

ate /et <i>US</i> : eɪt/	new /nju <i>US</i> : nu/
half /hɑ:f <i>US</i> : hæf/	vase /vɑ:z <i>US</i> : veɪs/.

Quite often only part of a word needs to be re-spelt phonetically for GA users as at:

ceremony /ˈserəməni <i>US</i> : -məʊni/	versatile /ˈvɜ:sətaɪl <i>US</i> : -tɪ/
civilisation /ˈsɪvɪlɪzəʃn <i>US</i> : -tɪz-/	voluntary /ˈvɒləntɪri <i>US</i> : -teri/

These mean that the GA recommended pronunciations are /ˈserəməʊni/, /ˈsɪvɪlɪzəʃn/, /ˈvɜ:sətɪl/ and /ˈvɒləntɪri/.

Stress notation It will be seen that at every headword which consists of more than one syllable /*ˈ*/ occurs immediately *before* the syllable on which the *principal stress* falls, as at:

any /*ˈ*eni/
domestic /dəˈmestɪk/

increase *n* /*ˈ*mkrɪs/
increase *v* /ɪnˈkrɪs/

When any other syllable which is usually stressed comes earlier in the word than the principal stress it is preceded by the sign for subordinate stress /*ˈ*/, as at:

unseen /*ˈ*ʌnˈsiːn/
university /*ˈ*juːnɪˈvɜːsəti/

examination /ɪgˈzæmɪˈneɪʃn/
individuality /*ˈ*ɪndrɪˈvɪdʒuːələti/

Syllable boundaries The hyphen (-) is also used in a few places to clarify the phonetic point of division between two parts of a compound word, as at *biped*, *cartridge*, *partridge* etc. For example **cartridge** /*ˈ*ka-trɪdʒ/ is so shown to suggest that the junction between the two halves of the word should be pronounced as in *car-trip* and not as in *cart-ride*.

Inflections Plurals and past-tense forms are not provided with pronunciations unless they are *phonetically* irregular. They may be phonetically quite regular even though there is some irregularity in their spelling.

For example, the plural of *sky* is the semi-irregular *skies* but, since its spoken form is made in exactly the way it would be if there were no irregularity in its spelling, the pronunciation /*skɑːz*/ is not offered. On the other hand the plural of *basis* is irregular both in sound and spelling so it appears as *bases* /*ˈ*bæsiːz/. Some words have alternative inflections, one regular and the other irregular. For instance at *abacus* the regular plural *abacuses* is not transcribed phonetically but the irregular form *abaci* is given: /*ˈ*æbəsəɪ/. The verb *lean* has a past form *leaned* which is regular in spelling and recommended to be given the regular pronunciation /*lɪnd*/ which it would be a waste of space to show. It also has another irregular past form *leant* for which a pronunciation is provided /*lent*/. Those who would like to be reminded of the regular patterns of the formation of plurals and past participles in spoken English should note the following:

- i. Plurals are formed by the addition of /-z/ except that
 - a) if the final sound of the noun's singular is /p, t, k, f or θ/ the addition is /-s/.
 - b) if the final sound of the noun's singular is /s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ or dʒ/ the addition is /-ɪz/.
- ii. Past participles are formed by the addition of /-d/ except that
 - a) if the final sound of the verb's present tense is /p, k, f, θ, s, ʃ or tʃ/, the addition is /-t/;
 - b) if the final sound of the verb's present tense is /t or d/ the addition is /-ɪd/.

Combinations Within most entries, running on from the treatment of the headword, combinations follow in alphabetical order. Since the pronunciation of the headword has already been made clear, and since the pronunciation of any other word with which it is combined can be found – if the reader is not certain of it – at its own entry as a headword, there is usually no need for full transcription of any of these combinations. However, if they consist of single new words, printed with the tilde (the sign ~, which is used to avoid repetition of the headword) followed without any intervening space by the next word or linked to it with a hyphen, then their full stress patterns are always indicated, as at:

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hot: `hotbed `hot-`blooded `hothouse `hot-plate hot-`water-bottle
play: `child's~ ~-boy ~-mate ~-acting ~-wright

Invisible compounds, etc.

Large numbers of the combinations into which our headwords enter consist of phrasal verbs, idiomatic fixed phrases, compound nouns and compound adjectives etc which, unlike the combinations printed in one solid piece or linked by hyphens, show no visible evidence of the fact that they may behave very much as they would if they were linked in spelling. Many of these compound adjectives and compound nouns etc exist in two or more printed forms (solid, hyphenated or spaced) one of which is favoured by one group of writers and printing houses, one by another.

For most of the unlinked sequences of words the very important principal stress usually falls on the last 'non-grammatical' word of the combination.

A 'non-grammatical' word is usually easily distinguished from a 'grammatical' word. (They are sometimes also called 'form' and 'content' words). A grammatical word serves to show the relationships of the main parts of an expression to each other. Such words are chiefly the articles, monosyllabic prepositions, conjunctions, object pronouns and auxiliary verbs. The non-grammatical words such as main verbs, nouns, adjectives and most adverbs are usually stressed.

As even those with quite a slight knowledge of English will easily notice, all unlinked combinations are usually stressed on non-grammatical words with their principal stress on the last of these. Thus the stress values of enormous numbers of these headword combinations can be *conveyed* without our actually marking them. Nevertheless, whenever there might be doubt about the stress values of such sequences of words, stress markings are provided. This very wide coverage extends not only to the sub-headwords (shown in **bold type**) but to the idiomatic fixed phrases and phrasal verbs (shown in **bold italic type**) and also, where useful, to other fixed phrases and compound nouns etc appearing (in *italic type*) in the examples of the uses of headwords and sub-headwords in phrases and sentences.

However, within full sentences, the stress patterns of a great many words very often have to be adjusted to their surroundings. There stress is not usually indicated because it might distort rather than display properly the *basic* stress pattern which must be learnt as an integral feature of every English word.

For example, it will be seen at *circuit* that the fixed phrase *make a circuit of* is unmarked because its stress pattern is predictable. It has no stresses on the article or the preposition but subordinate stress on *make* and principal stress on the final non-grammatical word, and is thus to be taken as stressed 'make a `circuit of. Under the headword *cling* the two alternative phrases shown as *cling to/together* are to be interpreted as having no stress on the preposition but principal stress on the final non-grammatical word *together*: thus conveying `cling to and 'cling to`gether.

Under the headword *citrus* the example of its use attributively is the 'invisible' compound noun ~`fruit which is provided with a stress mark to show that it does not have the stress values of 'bitter`fruit but those of `grapefruit. Similarly at *clerk* the examples a `bank ~ and a 'corre`spondence ~ are marked for stress whereas *the Town C*~ needs no marking as it is to be interpreted as *the* 'Town`Clerk. At *clock* the fixed phrase *work against the clock* is unmarked because it