

**WEBSTER'S
ELEMENTARY
DICTIONARY**

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PREFACE

This is *Webster's Elementary Dictionary*, written especially for you, a student in one of the elementary grades. It is designed to be your very first real dictionary. This dictionary is more advanced than the simple picture dictionaries meant for children who are not in school yet. It has many of the features of the larger dictionaries that grown-ups use. Yet the definitions are in plain language that you will find easy to understand.

Webster's Elementary Dictionary is produced by a company that has been publishing dictionaries since 1847—the same company that publishes *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* and *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. This book is like a little brother or sister to those larger books—the smallest of a family of dictionaries. It was written by the permanent Merriam-Webster staff using much of the same information about words that was used in making the larger dictionaries.

In your dictionary you will find the meanings and uses of more than 32,000 words and phrases. They include all of the words you ordinarily use in talking and in writing and those you are likely to meet in your schoolwork or in your outside reading. In choosing the stock of words to be included in this book, we studied school textbooks and other material that students like you normally read. We also checked studies of the words other students of your age know and use so that we could be sure the book was complete but the definitions not too hard to understand.

Once you become familiar with your dictionary, you will discover a lot of information between its covers. You will get help with understanding meanings and with spelling and pronouncing new words. You will learn much about grammar and usage. And you will find out the differences between words with similar meanings and discover the interesting histories of many words. There are hundreds of examples to show you how words are actually used and hundreds of color pictures, too. In the back of the book are special sections with common abbreviations, signs and symbols—like those used on weather maps that you see on television—and lists of the presidents and vice-presidents of the United States, the states of the United States, and the nations of the world with their capitals.

Your dictionary is a very special book, and when you learn to use it properly it can become one of the most useful books you own. It is not a book you will read once and put on a shelf. Instead, it is a book you will want to pick up often. We hope that the more you use your *Webster's Elementary Dictionary*, the more it will become like an old friend to you, like someone you go to whenever you have a question or a problem about words. Because there are so many different kinds of information and so little space to put it in, we have had to use different type styles and a number of abbreviations, special words, and symbols, like *pl.*, *synonyms*, *;*, **, *()*, each of which has a special meaning. These symbols and words are all explained in the next section, *Using Your Dictionary*. If you want to get the most from your dictionary, you should study this section.

USING YOUR DICTIONARY

1. MAIN ENTRY WORDS

When you open your dictionary to just about any page, you will find a list of words down the left-hand column printed in heavy black bold-face type. Each of these is followed by information that explains or tells something about the word. The boldface word or phrase together with the explanation is a **dictionary entry**, and the boldface word itself is the **entry word** or **main entry**.

s \ 'es/ *n*, *pl* *s*'s or *ss* \ 'es-əz/ *often cap* 1 : the nineteenth letter of the English alphabet 2 : a grade rating a student's work as satisfactory

s *vb* *suffix* — used to form the third person singular present of most verbs that do not end in *s*, *z*, *sh*, *ch*, or *y* following a consonant (*falls*) (*takes*) (*plays*)

saber-toothed tiger \, sā-ber-, tūht-/ *n* : a very large prehistoric cat with long sharp curved eyeteeth

safe *n* : a metal chest for keeping something (as money) safe

safeguard \ 'sāf-, gārd/ *n* : something that protects and gives safety

safety pin *n* : a pin that is bent back on itself to form a spring and has a guard that covers the point

The main entry may take many forms. It may be a single letter like **s** or a single word like **safe**. It may also be a compound made up of two or more words written together (**safeguard**) or as separate words (**safety pin**) or with a hyphen (**saber-toothed tiger**). Sometimes an entry will be made up of all capital letters (**IOU** or **TV**) or of a letter and number (**A1**) or even of a letter and a word (**T-shirt**).

Finally some entries are only parts of words. The entry **-s** is one of these, and the entries **bi-** and **-graph**, shown below, are two more examples. Such entries all begin or end with a hyphen. They are the building blocks of our language, for they are used to create many new words.

bi- *prefix* 1 : two 2 : coming or occurring every two 3 : into two parts (*bisect*) 4 : twice : doubly : on both sides

-graph \ 'gräf/ *n* *suffix* 1 : something written 2 : instrument for making or sending records (*telegraph*)

For example, **bi-** ("two") when combined with **cycle** gives us **bicycle** (literally "two wheels"). The word part **-graph** ("something written") combines with other word parts to give us such words as **autograph** and **paragraph**. The

hyphen with the entry word is only there to show you where the word part is attached to other word parts. The entry **bi-** goes at the beginning of a word and is called a **prefix**. The entry **-graph** goes at the end of a word and is called a **suffix**.

Now that you know the kinds of entries you will find in your dictionary, you should know how the entries are arranged so you can find them easily and quickly.

All of the words in your dictionary are arranged in alphabetical order. To find a word, you simply look it up by the way it is spelled. Since **a** comes before **b** and **b** comes before **c** in the alphabet, you know that all of the words beginning with **a** will come before all of those beginning with **b**, the **b** words will all come before the **c** words, and so on all the way through the dictionary.

But merely grouping together all of the words that begin with the letter **a** would not help you find a particular word, like **alphabet**, very quickly. Well, alphabetical order also applies within each letter grouping. After all of the words are arranged by first letter, they are further grouped alphabetically by second letter. Then those words with the same first and second letters are arranged in alphabetical order by third letter and so on until every word has its own special place in the dictionary. So if you should want to look up the words **brat**, **bite**, and **bad**, you know that **bad** will come first, then **bite**, and finally **brat** because **a** comes first in the alphabet and **i** comes ahead of **r**. The words **chop**, **chute**, **chili**, **chalk**, and **cheese** all begin with the letters **ch**, so their third letters must be used in ordering them: **chalk**, **cheese**, **chili**, **chop**, and **chute**.

Now when we arrange words in alphabetical order, we do not count spaces or hyphens between words. The words are arranged just as if the space or hyphen were not there. So you will find these words that begin **doub** arranged in the dictionary in just the order you see them here.

doubt *vb* ...
doubtless *adv* \, deb-el-'bəs/ *n* ...
doubtless *cross* \, deb-el-'krōs/ *vb* ...
doubtless *head-er* \, deb-el-'hed-er/ *n* ...

Some of the main entries in *Webster's Elementary Dictionary* are groups of letters that are not pronounced like ordinary words. But these entries, like **DDT** and **TV**, are still words, and they are arranged among the other words using the same rule of alphabetical order. Thus you will find **TV** between **tutor** and **twaddle**, because **v**, the second letter in **TV**, comes after **u** and before **w**.

Whenever the main entry has a number in it, like **A1**, it is arranged just as if the number were

spelled out. You will find **A1** between the words **anywise** and **aorta** just as if it were spelled **A one**.

2. END-OF-LINE DIVISIONS

Most of the entry words in your dictionary are shown with dots at different places in the word. These dots are not a part of the spelling of the word but are there to show you end-of-line divisions—places where you can put a hyphen if you have to break up a word because there is room for only part of it at the end of a line.

sat-is-fac-tion \,sat-es-'fak-shen\ *n* 1: the act of satisfying : the condition of being satisfied 2 : something that satisfies

In the example shown above, the word is normally written **satisfaction**, but if you have to divide it at the end of a line, the dots show you three places where you can put a hyphen.

sat-
isfaction

satis-
faction

satisfac-
tion

Words should not be divided so that only one letter comes at the end of a line or at the beginning of the next line.

1aban-don \ə-'ban-den\ *vb* ...
ba-nana \be-'nan-ə\ *n* ...

For this reason no dot is shown after the first letter of the word **abandon** or before the last letter of the word **banana**. Thus, end-of-line divisions do not always separate the syllables of a word. Syllables are shown only in the pronunciation, explained in the next section.

When two or more main entries have the same spelling and the same end-of-line divisions, the dots are shown only in the first of these entries.

1mo-tion \-'mō-shən\ *n* ...
2motion *vb* ...

3. PRONUNCIATION SYMBOLS

The English language is used in two different ways, in speaking and writing. Although the language is the same in both uses, writing and speaking are quite different from each other.

Speech is made up of sounds and writing uses marks made on paper.

It is often hard to tell from the written spelling how to pronounce a word. Different letters may be used to spell the same sound, as in the words **right** and **write** or **sea** and **see**. One letter or a group of letters may be used to spell different sounds, like the letter **a** in the words **bat**, **car**, **late**, **any**, and **above**. There are also many words that have two or more pronunciations.

In order to show the sounds of words in this book, we use special **pronunciation symbols**. Each pronunciation symbol stands for one important sound in English. Most of the symbols look like letters of the regular alphabet. However, do not think of pronunciation symbols as letters. Learn the sound each symbol stands for. When you see a symbol, then think of its sound. Pronunciation symbols are always written between slant lines \,lk-'this\ so you will know that they are not regular letters. To see how a pronunciation is given in an actual entry, look at the example **saunter** here.

saun-ter \-'sɔnt-ər\ *vb* : to walk in a slow relaxed way : **STROLL**

A list of all the pronunciation symbols is printed on page 18a. A shorter list is printed at the bottom right-hand corner of the right-hand pages in the dictionary. In both lists the symbols are followed by words containing the sound of each symbol. The 'oldface letters in these words stand for the same sound as the symbol. If you say the sample word in your regular voice, you will hear the sound that the symbol stands for.

We use hyphens with the pronunciation symbols to show the syllables of a word, as in these examples.

beast \-'bēst\ *n* ...
(1 syllable)
bed-side \-'bed-'sīd\ *n* ...
(2 syllables)
1cast-away \-'kas-te-'wā\ *adj* ...
(3 syllables)
op-ti-mism \-'ap-te-'mīz-əm\ *n* ...
(4 syllables)

Of course, the syllables of words are not separated when we speak. One sound in a word follows right after another without pause.

Notice that in the examples **castaway** and **optimism** the number and position of the hyphens are not the same as the number and position of the dots in the entry words. These dots *do not* show syllables. Syllables are shown only by the hyphens in the pronunciation part of the entry.

Some syllables of a word are spoken with greater force, or **stress**, than others. Three kinds of stress are shown in this dictionary. **Primary**

stress, or strong stress, is shown by a high mark ^ placed before a syllable. Secondary stress, or medium stress, is shown by a low mark \ before a syllable. The third kind of stress is weak stress. There is no mark before syllables with weak stress. Each of these kinds of stress is shown in the pronunciation for **penman-ship**.

pen-man-ship \ˈpen-mən-ship\ *n* . . .

The first syllable has primary stress. The second syllable has weak stress. The third syllable has secondary stress. If you say the word to yourself, you will hear each kind of stress.

Many words are pronounced in two, three, or even more different ways. Two or more pronunciations for an entry are separated by commas. Look at the example **ration**.

1ra-tion \ˈrā-shən, ˈrā-shən\ *n* . . .

The order in which we list pronunciations does not mean that one is better than another. All pronunciations shown in your dictionary are used by large numbers of people, and you will be correct whichever one you use. When learning a new word, you should choose the pronunciation that sounds most natural to you.

Sometimes when a second or third pronunciation is shown, only part of the pronunciation of a word changes. When this happens, we may show only the part that changes. To get the full second or third pronunciation of a word, just add the part that changes to the part that does not change.

greasy \ˈgrē-sē, -zē\ *adj* . . .
pa-jamas \pe-ˈjām-ēz, -jam-ēz\ *n pl* . . .

The second pronunciation of **greasy** is \ˈgrē-zē\ and the second pronunciation of **pajamas** is \pe-ˈjām-ēz\.

If two or more entries are spelled the same and have the same pronunciation and end-of-line division, we show the pronunciation only for the first of these entries.

1se-cure \sɪ-ˈkyūr\ *adj* . . .
2se-cure *vb* . . .

Many compound entries are made up of two or three separate words. If we do not show a pronunciation for all or part of such an entry, the missing pronunciation is the same as that for the individual word or words.

milk shake *n* : a drink made of milk, a flavoring syrup, and ice cream shaken or mixed thoroughly
1milk \ˈmɪlk\ *n* . . .
1shake \ˈʃaɪk\ *vb* . . .

No pronunciation is shown for the example **milk shake**. This means the two words are pronounced just like the separate entries **milk** and **shake**.

When a boldface word appears without a definition at the end of a main entry, sometimes we show only part of the pronunciation. This means the rest of the word is pronounced the same as part of the main entry.

post-pone \pōst-ˈpōn\ *vb* . . .
— **post-pone-ment** \-ment\ *n*

In the example **postpone** the complete pronunciation of **postponement** is \pōst-ˈpōn-ment\. Some of these entries will show no pronunciation at all. In these cases the pronunciation of the compound is the same as the pronunciation of the main entry plus the pronunciation of the word ending, which is found at its own alphabetical place in the dictionary.

re-mote \ri-ˈmōt\ *adj* . . .
— **re-mote-ly** *adv* — **re-mote-ness** *n*

In the example **remote**, the entry **remotely** is pronounced \ri-ˈmōt-lē\ and **remoteness** is pronounced \ri-ˈmōt-nes\.

4. VARIANT SPELLINGS

After the main entry word you may see a second or third spelling, also in boldface type. Additional spellings are called **variant spellings** or simply **variants**. Sometimes the variant spellings are very similar (**scepter** or **sceptre**) and sometimes they are quite different (**catsup** or **ketchup**).

scep-ter or **scep-tre** \ˈsep-ter\ *n* : a rod carried by a ruler as a sign of authority
cat-sup \ˈkech-ep, ˈkach-ep, ˈkat-sep\ or
ketch-up \ˈkech-ep, ˈkach-ep\ *n* . . .

Variant spellings are usually separated by **or**. The **or** tells you that both spellings are common in good usage. One appears about as often as the other.

Usually we show variants in alphabetical order when one form is not used much more often than another. This is the case with the entries **scepter** or **sceptre** and **catsup** or **ketchup**. If, however, one form does seem to be preferred, we show that one first. This sometimes means that variants will be out of alphabetical order.

Gyp-sy or **Gip-sy** \ˈjɪp-sē\ *n, pl* . . .

In the example **Gypsy** or **Gipsy** this is the case, since in strict alphabetical order the **Gipsy** spelling would come first. The order of the variants tells you that the spelling **Gypsy** is used a little more often than **Gipsy**.

Keep in mind that all of the variants shown in this dictionary are correct. However, you should pick one form and use it in all of your writing.

Occasionally you will see a variant spelling shown after the word *also*. Look at the example *amoeba*.

amoeba also ame-ba \ə-'mē-bə\ n, pl...

The *also* tells you that the next spelling is much less common in ordinary usage than the first, although it is still a correct spelling.

When variant spellings are shown at the beginning of the entry, all of the variants are used in all meanings. If one variant form is shown at a particular definition, however, that spelling is more common for that meaning.

disk or disc \ˈdɪsk\ n 1 : something that is or appears to be flat and round 2 usually disc : a phonograph record — disk-like \-ˈlɪk\ adj

The information at the entry for *disk or disc* tells you that both spellings are used for both meanings. The form *disk* is more often used for meaning 1 (remember that when variants are not in alphabetical order you know the first one is used more often). The label *usually disc* at meaning 2 tells you that *disc* is more common than *disk* for meaning 2.

5. FUNCTIONAL LABELS

Words are used in many different ways in a sentence. You know, for example, that if a word is used as the name of something (car, house, rainbow), it is called a **noun**. If it describes some action or state of being (run, stand, live), the word is a **verb**. Words that show a quality of something (tall, short, fast) are **adjectives**, and words that tell how, when, or where something happens (quickly, very, yesterday, here) are **adverbs**. **Pronouns** (them, you, that) are words which substitute for nouns, and **conjunctions** (and, but, yet) join two words or groups of words. **Prepositions** (to, for, by) combine with nouns and pronouns to form phrases that answer such questions as where?, how?, and which?, and **interjections** (hi, adios, ouch) stand alone and often show a feeling or a reaction to something rather than a meaning.

To show you how the various entry words are used, or how they function in a sentence, we use **functional labels** before the definitions. These labels are usually abbreviations in slanting *italic* type, and they come right after the pronunciation—when one is shown—or immediately after the entry word.

sea-coast \ˈsē-ˌkɔst\ n : the shore of the sea

The eight most common functions, known as

parts of speech, are shown in the examples below.

²cereal *n* ... ¹none \ˈnən\ *pron* ...
²fish *vb* ... ³since *conj* ...
 hos-tile \ˈhāst-ɪ\ ²under *prep* ...
adj ... ⁴why \wɪ, hwɪ\ *interj* ...
²just *adv* ...

In addition to these parts of speech, a few other special functional labels are used in this book. The words *the*, *a*, and *an* are used before nouns to show that a certain one or any one of a certain group is being talked about. Because the word *the* points out a certain one, it is called a **definite article**. The words *a* and *an*, which refer to any one of many, are called **indefinite articles**.

The prefixes and suffixes that we talked about in the section on main entries are also indicated by an italic functional label. Often these labels will be combined with a part-of-speech label when the suffix or prefix always makes a certain kind of word.

-g-ra-phy \g-re-fē\ n suffix

In the example, *-graphy* always combines with other words or word parts to form nouns (*photography, biography*), so its functional label is **noun suffix**.

There are a few special verbs that sometimes are used to help other verbs, such as *may* in a question like "May I go with you?" These special verbs are shown with the italic functional label **helping verb**.

may \mä\ helping verb, past might \mɪt\;
present sing & pl may ...

6. HOMOGRAHS

Often you will find two, three, or more main entries that come one after another and are spelled exactly alike.

¹seal \ˈsēl\ *n 1 : a sea mammal that swims with flippers, lives mostly in cold regions, eats flesh, and is hunted for fur, hides, or oil 2 : the soft dense fur of a northern seal*

²seal *n 1 : a device with a cut or raised design or figure that can be stamped or pressed into wax or paper 2 : a piece of wax stamped with a design and used to seal a letter or package 3 : a stamp that may be used to close a letter or package (Christmas seals) 4 : something (as a pledge) that makes safe or secure 5 : a closing that is tight and perfect 6 : something that closes tightly*

³seal *vb 1 : to mark with a seal 2 : to close or make fast with or as if with a seal — seal-er n*

Although these words look alike, they are differ-

ent words because they come from different sources and so have different meanings or because they are used in different ways in the sentence.

These similar entries are called **homographs** (from **homo-** "the same" and **-graph** "something written"—in this case "words written in the same way"). Each homograph has a small raised number before it. This number is used only in the dictionary entry to show you that these are different words. The number is not used when you write the word.

Let's look closely at the homographs for **seal** to see just why they are different. The first entry, a noun, is defined as "a sea mammal." The second **seal** entry is also a noun, but this meaning, "a device with a design that can be stamped on paper," is completely different from the meaning of the first entry. The third homograph of **seal** is certainly related to the second, but ³**seal** is a verb, and since it has a different use in the sentence, we show it as a different entry word.

7. INFLECTED FORMS

Whenever we talk about more than one of something, we have to use a special form of a noun. If we want to say that an action is taking place now or has happened already, we need a different form of the verb for each meaning. To say that this is bigger, smaller, or quicker than that, we have to use a special form of an adjective or adverb. These special forms usually involve a change in spelling. These forms are called **inflected forms** or **inflections** of the words.

¹**shade** \ˈshād\ *n* 1 : partial darkness (the trees cast *shade*) 2 : space sheltered from light or heat and especially from the sun (sit in the *shade* of a tree) 3 **shades** *pl* : the shadows that gather as darkness falls (the *shades* of night) 4 : GHOST, SPIRIT 5 : something that blocks off or cuts down light (a lamp *shade*) (a window *shade*) 6 : the darkening of some objects in a painting or drawing to suggest that they are in shade 7 : the darkness or lightness of a color (four *shades* of brown) 8 : a very small difference or amount (just a *shade* taller) (*shades* of meaning)

²**shade** *vb* **shad-ed**; **shad-ing** 1 : to shelter from light or heat 2 : to mark with shades of light or color (*shade* a drawing) 3 : to show or begin to have slight differences of color, value, or meaning

shady \ˈshād-ē\ *adj* **shad-i-er**; **shad-i-est** 1 : sheltered from the sun's rays 2 : not right or honest (*shady* business deals) — **shad-i-ness** *n*

Nouns show more than one by means of plural forms—"the *shades* of night." Verbs can be made to show that something is happening now by the

use of the **present participle** form—"that tree is *shading* our flowers"—or that something happened before but is not happening now by use of the **past tense** or the **past participle** forms—"I *shaded* my eyes; we have *shaded* parts of the drawing to show shadows." The **third person singular present tense** form of verbs shows what he, she, or it is doing now—"this umbrella *shades* us from the sun." Adjectives and adverbs show how one thing is compared with another or with all others of the same kind by **comparative** and **superlative** forms—"this spot is *shadier* than that, but over there is the *shadiest* spot in the garden."

For most words inflected forms are made in a regular way. That is, plurals usually are formed simply by adding **-s** or **-es** to the base word (*shade* → *shades*; *box* → *boxes*); verb inflections are formed by adding **-ed** for the past tense and past participle (*walk* → *walked*), **-ing** for the present participle (*walk* → *walking*), and **-s** or **-es** for the third person singular present tense form (*walk* → *walks*; *wash* → *washes*). Comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs are considered regular if they are formed by adding **-er** and **-est** to the base word or if the words *more* and *most* are used (*high* → *higher*, *highest*; *natural* → *more natural*, *most natural*).

We do not show most regular inflections in *Webster's Elementary Dictionary* since they should give you no problems in spelling.

brigade \bri-ˈgād\ *n* 1 : a body of soldiers consisting of two or more regiments

differ \ˈdif-er\ *vb* 1 : to be not the same : be unlike ...

dull \ˈdɛl\ *adj* 1 : mentally slow : STUPID ...

When you see entries like the examples **brigade**, **differ**, and **dull**, you will know that the inflected forms are regular. **Brigade** becomes **brigades** in the plural; the past and past participle of **differ** are both **differed**, the present participle is **differing**, and the third person singular is **differs**; and **dull** becomes **duller** in the comparative and **dullest** in the superlative.

We do show you inflections, however, when they are formed in any way other than by simply adding a suffix. If the base word is changed in any way when the suffix is added or if there are variant inflected forms, these forms are shown.

proph-e-cy \ˈpräf-e-sē\ *n*, *pl* **proph-e-cies** ...

²**model** *vb* **mod-el-ed** or **mod-el-ied**; **mod-el-ing** or **mod-el-ling** ...

We also show inflections for a word when no suffix is added

deer \ˈdier\ *n*, *pl* **deer** ...

and for any words that have regular inflections when we think you might have questions about how they are formed.

chim-ney \ˈchīm-nē\ *n*, *pl* chim-neys . . .

For verb inflections only the past tense (the -ed form) and the present participle (the -ing form) are normally shown. The past participle is shown only when it is different from the past tense form. When it is shown, it comes between the past tense and present participle.

The third person singular present tense form (he *likes*, she *knows*, it *seems*) is the most regular of the verb inflections. For most verbs it is formed simply by adding -s or -es to the base word—even for verbs whose other inflections are not regular. We show this inflection only when we think its spelling or pronunciation might present a problem. When it is shown, this form comes after the present participle form.

go \ˈɡō\ *v* *went* \ˈwent\; *gone* \ˈɡɒn\; *going* \ˈɡoʊ-ɪŋ\; *goes* .

Nouns are usually entered in *Webster's Elementary Dictionary* in the singular form, that is, in the form that means only one of something. And these words can either be used as a singular or be made into plural nouns. However, there are some entries that are used only in the plural. These are shown by the special label *n pl*.

aus-pi-c-es \ˈoʊ-spi-sēz\ *n pl*: support and guidance of a sponsor (a concert given under the auspices of the school)

Some words that end in an -s, like *gymnastics*, may be thought of as singular in some uses and as plural in others.

gym-nas-tics \jīm-ˈnas-tiks\ *n sing or pl*: physical exercises for developing skill, strength, and control in the use of the body or a sport in which such exercises are performed

If you use this word for the sport, for example, you might think of it as singular, like this—“gymnastics is a sport in the Olympic Games.” But if you think of the various exercises themselves, you might think of the word as a plural and use a plural verb, like this—“I think gymnastics are very hard to do.” The *n sing or pl* label at such entries tells you that sometimes the word is used as a singular and sometimes as a plural.

There are a few entries in *Webster's Elementary Dictionary* that have unusual plural uses at individual meanings.

ˈdɑrt \ˈdɑrt\ *n* 1: a small pointed object that is meant to be thrown 2 *darts pl*: a game in which darts are thrown at a target 3: a quick sudden movement 4: a stitched fold in a garment

These special uses we show by a *pl* label at the individual definitions. In the dart example, the

pl label at meaning 2 tells you that the spelling is *darts* and it is plural in use. If the plural form has already been shown in boldface at the beginning of the entry, we show it in italic type before the individual definition.

Sometimes a noun entry will show variant plural forms, but only one of these variants is used in a particular meaning. To show this situation, we place the plural form after the *pl* label at the individual meaning.

ˈhəʊz \ˈhōz\ *n, pl* hoses or hoses-es 1 *pl* hose: STOCKING, SOCK 2: a flexible tube for carrying fluid

This is shown in the example *hose*, where the *pl hose* label tells you that the plural form for this meaning is *hoses* but the use is usually singular.

Occasionally you will see a noun entry where you think an inflected form should be shown but it is not. Words like *diplomacy* are not used as plurals, so no plural form is shown.

di-pl-o-ma-cy \də-ˈplō-mə-sē\ *n* 1: the work of keeping up relations between the governments of different countries 2: skill in dealing with others: TACT

8. USAGE LABELS

In addition to functional labels at individual entries we use another kind of italic label to give you information about how a word is used. These usage labels come after the functional labels or, if they apply only to a particular meaning, just before the beginning of the definition.

ˈsɪr \ˈsɪr\ *n* 1 *often cap*: ˈFATHER 1 2: ANCESTOR 3: the male parent of an animal

One of the things the usage label may tell you is whether or not a particular word is sometimes written with a capital letter. Whenever a word is always or usually written with a capital letter, it has a capital letter in the main entry.

ˈθɜrzdə \ˈθerz-dē\ *n*: the fifth day of the week

But some words are written with a small letter or a capital letter about equally often. These entries have an italic label *often cap*. Other words are written with a capital letter in some meanings and not in others. These words are usually shown in the dictionary with a small first letter. The italic label tells you when the word is always spelled with a capital letter (*cap*) or very frequently spelled with a capital letter (*often cap*).

ˈhoʊst *n, often cap*: the bread used in Christian Communion

dip-per \ˈdip-er\ *n.* 1 : one that dips 2 : a ladle or scoop for dipping 3 **cap** : a group of seven stars in the northern sky arranged in a form like a dipper with the two stars that form the outer edge of the cup pointing to the North Star 4 **cap** : a group of seven stars in the northern sky similar to the Dipper but with the North Star forming the outer end of the handle
french fry *n.*, often **cap** 1st *F* : a strip of potato fried in deep fat (steak and french fries)

In the example ³**host**, the label tells you that sometimes the word is spelled with a capital letter and sometimes not. In the example **dipper**, the word is normally written with a capital letter (notice the **cap** label) when the meaning is 3 or 4 but with a small letter when the meaning is 1 or 2.

See if you can tell what the label at the entry **french fry** means. Would you expect to see the word sometimes spelled French fry?

Another thing the usage labels can tell you is whether a word or a particular meaning is limited in use. One kind of word with limited use is one that is not used much anymore although it was quite common a long time ago.

thou \thaʊ\ *pron.*, *archaic* : the one these words are spoken or written to

The *archaic* label at the sample entry **thou** tells you that **thou** is such a word. It is shown in this book because you may sometimes see it in very old writings, for example, in the Bible.

The last kind of usage label tells you a certain word or meaning is most commonly used in a limited area of the English-speaking world.

²**lift** *n.* 1 : the amount that may be lifted at one time : **LOAD** 2 : the action or an instance of lifting 3 : help especially in the form of a ride (give a person a lift) 4 *chiefly British* : **ELEVATOR** 2 5 : an upward force (as on an airplane wing) that opposes the pull of gravity

In the sample entry **lift** you will see that meaning 4 is labeled *chiefly British*. This means that the word in this meaning is used more often in Great Britain than in the United States.

9. DEFINITIONS

skim \ˈskim\ *vb.* skimmed; skim-ming 1 : to clean a liquid of scum or floating substance : remove (as cream or film) from the top part of a liquid 2 : to read or examine quickly and not thoroughly 3 : to throw so as to skip along the surface of water 4 : to pass swiftly or lightly over

The definitions are what many people consider the most important part of the dictionary,

because meanings are what people usually think of when they think of a dictionary.

All of the definitions in *Webster's Elementary Dictionary* start with a boldface colon that sets them off from other information included in the entry. The colon is used for each definition, even when there are two or more definitions for one meaning. (Look at meaning 1 of **skim**.) Most of the words entered in this book have more than one meaning and therefore they have more than one definition. These separate meanings are shown by boldface numbers placed in front of the colons. **Skim** has four numbered meanings.

We have arranged the definitions in your dictionary in historical order. The oldest meaning is shown as meaning number 1 and the next oldest meaning is shown as meaning number 2, and so on. The meanings that have most recently come into use are at the end. This allows you to see, just by reading the entry, how a word has grown in use from the first meaning to the last.

Let's look at meaning number 1 of **skim**. This meaning first came into use in English many centuries ago, and through the years it gained a more specific use, that of taking the cream off milk. This specific use is shown as the second definition at meaning 1. The second definition does not change the original meaning. It only adds a little.

Meaning 2 of **skim** seems to have come into use as a figure of speech. If you think of a spoon barely touching the surface of water or milk or going just under the surface to scoop off something, you realize that the spoon is only taking off what can be seen on the surface. Most of the liquid remains behind. By first applying the word **skim** to reading or examining something and only getting what could be seen "on the surface" without going more deeply into the work, someone was using **skim** as a figure of speech. As more and more people used the word in this way, it came to have a set meaning.

Meaning 3, which developed after meanings 1 and 2, seems to have come from the first meaning in a similar way. This time, though, the idea of "just touching" a surface was the one that carried over to the act of causing rocks or other objects to bounce along the surface of a lake.

Can you guess at how meaning 4 came into use? Here it seems the meaning moved one more step away, from the idea of "just touching the surface" to that of "just missing the surface."

With the entry **skim**, you can see just how the word grew from one meaning to four. And the arrangement of the four meanings in historical order lets you follow that growth.

There may be times when you will look up a word and not be sure which of several meanings is the right one for the use you are checking. The way to tell which is the right definition is to substitute each definition in place of your word in the sentence until you find the one that is right.

Suppose you were reading the sentence "I just skimmed the book" and you were not certain

what *skim* meant. By reading the definitions of *skim* in the sentence you would be able to find the right meaning by substitution. You know that "I just removed cream from the top of the book" certainly is not correct, and it is most unlikely that the writer was "throwing a book so that it skipped across the surface of water" or "passing swiftly over the book." But when you substitute meaning 2 in the sentence, you get a sentence that makes sense. "I was just reading or examining the book quickly and not thoroughly." This is using the method of substitution to find the right meaning.

10. SYNONYMS AND CROSS-REFERENCES

slav-ery \ 'slā-və-rē, -'slāv-rē \ *n* 1 : hard tiring labor : DRUDGERY 2 : the state of being a slave : BONDAGE 3 : the custom or practice of owning slaves

In the entry *slavery* meanings 1 and 2 both have two definitions, each one beginning with a colon. The second definition in each case is a single word that means the same thing as the entry word *slavery* for that particular use. These words with the same meaning as the entry word are called **synonyms**. All synonyms in *Webster's Elementary Dictionary* are written in small capital letters. Any word in small capital letters is a **cross-reference**, referring you to another place in the book. In the case of these synonyms, the small capitals tell you to look at the entry for that word for a full explanation of the meaning or use.

You can see that *drudgery* is a synonym of the first meaning of *slavery* ("hard tiring labor") and *bondage* is a synonym of the second meaning ("the state of being a slave"). If you turn to the entry for *drudgery*, for example, you will find a definition that matches the definition for meaning 1 of *slavery*.

Sometimes an entry is defined only by a synonym.

northern lights *n pl* : AURORA BOREALIS
au-ro-ra bo-re-al-is \ ə-,rōr-ə-,bōr-ē-'al-es \ *n*
: broad bands of light that have a magnetic and electrical source and that appear in the sky at night especially in the arctic regions

Look at the example **northern lights**. The cross-reference AURORA BOREALIS tells you to look at the entry *aurora borealis* for a definition. The definition at *aurora borealis* is the same as it would be for *northern lights*, since both words mean the same thing. When using synonymous cross-references, we have always put the full definition at the most common of the synonyms.

Sometimes you will see a number used as part

of the cross-reference, as in the first meaning given for *host*.

'host \ 'hōst \ *n* 1 : ARMY 2 : MULTITUDE

The cross-reference to ARMY 1 tells you to look at meaning number 1 of the entry *army* for a definition that fits this meaning of *host*.

Because the definition of the synonym must also be a good definition of the entry word, both the entry word and the synonym will always have the same part of speech. Thus, if the synonym of a verb is an entry with two or more homographs, you will always know that the right entry will be the homograph that is a verb. Nevertheless, your dictionary helps you by showing the proper homograph number at the cross-reference when necessary.

dint \ 'dint \ *n* 1 : POWER 6, FORCE . . .

In the first meaning of the entry *dint*, the cross-reference tells you that meaning 6 of the first homograph of *power* is the synonym, because *dint* is a noun and only the first homograph of *power* is a noun.

The cross-reference printed in small capital letters is also used at certain entries that are variants or inflected forms of another entry.

caught *past of* CATCH
cauldron *variant of* CALDRON

In the examples *caught* and *cauldron* the cross-reference tells you that you will find a definition or explanation at the entry shown in small capital letters.

11. VERBAL ILLUSTRATIONS

'snap \ 'snap \ *vb* snapped; snap-ping 1 : to grasp or grasp at something suddenly with the mouth or teeth (fish *snapping* at the bait) 2 : to grasp at something eagerly (snapped at the chance to go) 3 : to get, take, or buy at once (snap up a bargain) 4 : to speak or utter sharply or irritably (snap out a command) . . .

At times you may look up a word in your dictionary and understand the definition but still not be sure about the right way to use the word. Sometimes the several meanings are similar but the ways in which the word is actually used in a sentence are quite different. To help you better understand these more difficult words and usages, we have given along with some definitions a brief phrase or sentence called a **verbal illustration**. It shows you a typical use of the word. Most of the definitions at *snap* have verbal illustrations to show how the word is used in each of those meanings. A verbal illustration is always placed after the definition, it is enclosed in point-

ed brackets, and it has the entry word, or an inflection of it, printed in italic type.

12. RUN-IN ENTRIES

Sometimes you will see boldface words in the middle of a definition. These are called **run-in entries**. Run-in entries are themselves defined by part of the main definition.

sol-stice \ˈsāl-stes, ˈsōl-, ˈsōl- n : the time of the year when the sun is farthest north (**summer solstice**, about June 22) or south (**winter solstice**, about December 22) of the equator

Within the main entry **solstice** the run-in entry **summer solstice** is being defined as "the time of the year when the sun is farthest north of the equator," and **winter solstice** is being defined as "the time of the year when the sun is farthest south of the equator."

13. USAGE NOTES

The italic usage labels that come before definitions are one way we give you information on the usage of the entry word, and the verbal illustrations after the definitions are another way. In *Webster's Elementary Dictionary* we give information on usage in still another way—usage notes that follow definitions. Usage notes are short phrases that are separated from the definition by a dash. They tell you how or when the entry word is used.

son-ny \ˈsən-ē n, pl **son-nies** : a young boy — used mostly to address a stranger

The example **sonny** shows you one kind of usage note. The following examples show some other kinds of information found in these notes.

cas-ta-net \ˈkas-tə-ˈnet n : a rhythm instrument that consists of two small ivory, wooden, or plastic shells fastened to the thumb and clicked by the fingers in time to dancing and music — usually used in pl.

cheer vb ... 4 : to grow or be cheerful — usually used with *up*

The note at **castanet** tells you that the word is usually used as a plural, **castanets**, although it is defined as a singular. This information is different from what would be given if the word had been entered as **castanets** or shown as **castanets** pl just before the definition. In both of those cases, you would be told that the word is defined as plural and is always plural in this use. Do you see how the note "usually used in pl." is different? It tells you that the word is singular—

it is defined as a singular and may sometimes be used as singular—but is most often used in the plural form and with a plural verb.

Usage notes like the one at **cheer** tell you what words are usually used with the entry word in a sentence. In this case, the expression is usually *cheer up*.

In a few entries we use a usage note in place of a definition. This is done when the way the word is used is more important than what the word means.

both conj — used before two words or phrases connected with *and* to stress that each is included (*both New York and London*)

We also use a usage note in place of a definition for all interjections, which usually express a feeling or reaction to something rather than a meaning.

amen \ˈā-men, ˈā- interj — used to express agreement (as after a prayer or a statement of opinion)

14. UNDEFINED RUN-ON ENTRIES

sour \ˈsaʊr adj 1 : having an acid taste 2 : having become acid through spoiling (*sour milk*) 3 : suggesting decay (*a sour smell*) 4 : not pleasant or friendly (*a sour look*) 5 : acid in reaction (*sour soil*) — **sour-ish** \-ish adj — **sour-ly** adv — **sour-ness** n

The boldface words at the end of the entry **sour** are **undefined run-on entries**. Each of these run-on entries is shown without a definition. You can easily discover the meaning of any of these words by simply combining the meaning of the base word (the main entry) and that of the suffix. For example, **sourish** is simply **sour** plus **-ish** ("somewhat") and so means "somewhat sour"; **sourly** is simply **sour** plus **-ly** ("in a specified manner") and so means "in a sour manner"; and **sourness** is **sour** plus **-ness** ("state : condition") and so means "the state or condition of being sour."

We have run on only words whose meaning you should have no trouble figuring out. Whenever a word derived from a main entry has a meaning that is not easily understandable from the meanings of the two parts, we have entered and defined it at its own alphabetical place.

15. SYNONYM PARAGRAPHS

At the end of certain entries, you will see a special kind of cross-reference like the one at **sparkle**.

'spar-kle \ˈspär-kəl\ *vb* **spar-kled**; **spar-king** 1 : to throw off sparks 2 : to give off small flashes of light (the diamond *sparkled*) 3 : to be lively or active (the conversation *sparkled*) **synonyms** see **GLEAM**

The direction "**synonyms** see **GLEAM**" means "for a discussion of synonyms that includes **sparkle**, see the entry **gleam**."

At several entries in *Webster's Elementary Dictionary* like **gleam** and **splendid**, shown here, there are short discussions of the differences between certain synonyms.

splen-did \ˈsplen-dəd\ *adj* 1 : having or showing splendor : **BRILLIANT** 2 : impressive in beauty, excellence, or magnificence (did a *splendid* job) (a *splendid* palace) 3 : **GRAND** 4 — **splen-did-ly** *adv*

synonyms **SPLENDID**, **GLORIOUS**, and **SUPERB** mean very impressive. **SPLENDID** suggests that something is far above the ordinary in excellence or magnificence (what a *splendid* idea) (a *splendid* jewel) **GLORIOUS** suggests that something is radiant with light or beauty (a *glorious* sunset) **SUPERB** suggests the highest possible point of magnificence or excellence (a *superb* museum) (the food *was superb*)

These discussions are called **synonym paragraphs**. Synonyms can often be substituted freely for one another in a sentence because they mean basically the same thing. But some words that are synonyms because they mean nearly the same thing cannot always be substituted for one another. They may differ slightly in what they suggest to the reader—in the image they call to mind. These suggested meanings are what make one synonym a better choice than another in certain situations.

In the synonym paragraphs we indicate these little differences between synonyms. Any of the three words in the paragraph following the entry **splendid** might be satisfactory in the examples given to indicate something impressive. But through long usage people have come to think of the word **glorious** as more suited to describing something where light or beauty is involved, while **splendid** and **superb** are used of other things. And something described as **superb** is often thought of as more wonderful than something merely **splendid**.

16. DEFINED RUN-ON PHRASES

The last kind of boldface entry you will find in your dictionary is the **defined run-on phrase**. These phrases are groups of words that, when

used together, have a special meaning that is more than just the sum of the ordinary meanings of each word.

'stand \ˈstænd\ *vb* **stood** \ˈstʊd\; **stand-ing** 1 : to be in or take a vertical position on one's feet 2 : to take up or stay in a specified position or condition (*stands* first in the class) (*stands* accused) (machines *standing* idle) 3 : to have an opinion (how do you *stand* on taxes?) 4 : to rest, remain, or set in a usually vertical position (*stand* the box in the corner) 5 : to be in a specified place (the house *stands* on the hill) 6 : to stay in effect (the order still *stands*) 7 : to put up with : **ENDURE** (can't *stand* pain) 8 : **UNDERGO** (*stand* trial) 9 : to perform the duty of (*stand* guard) — **stand by** : to be or remain loyal or true to (*stand by* a promise) — **stand for** 1 : to be a symbol for : **REPRESENT** 2 : to put up with : **PERMIT** (won't *stand for* any nonsense)

The **defined run-on phrases** are placed at the end of the entry that is the first major word of the phrase. Normally this will be the first noun or verb rather than an adjective or preposition. The phrases run on at **stand** all begin with the entry word **stand**. But some run-on phrases will not have the major word at the beginning. Keep in mind that the phrase will be entered at the first major word in the phrase. This word is usually a noun or a verb. Where do you think you would find the phrases **do away with**, **in the doghouse**, and **on fire**? If you said at the verb **do**, at the noun **doghouse**, and at the noun **fire**, then you understand how we enter phrases.

Where to find the phrase **read between the lines** may puzzle you at first, since it contains both a verb (**read**) and a noun (**lines**). But if you remember that the phrase will be entered at the first major word, in this case the verb **read**, you should have no trouble finding the phrases entered in this dictionary.

17. WORD HISTORY PARAGRAPHS

sur-ly \ˈsər-lē\ *adj* **sur-li-er**; **sur-li-est** : having a mean rude disposition : **UNFRIENDLY**

Word History The word *surly* comes from the word *sir*. Long ago, some Englishmen who had the title *Sir* became too proud of it. Such men were called *sirly*, a word that meant "overbearing" and "arrogant." Over the years the spelling changed to *surly* and came to be used of anyone who is rude and unfriendly.

One of the important jobs of people who study words and write dictionaries is finding out where

the words we use every day in English came from. Some of our words are made up by people using the language today. Whenever a scientist discovers a new element or creates a new drug, for example, he makes up a name for it.

But most of the words in the English language have a long history. They usually can be traced back to other words in languages older than English. Many of these languages, like ancient Greek and Latin, are no longer spoken today. The study of the origins of words can be fascinating, for many of our words have very interesting stories behind them.

In this dictionary, we share with you some of the interesting stories of word origins and trace the development of meanings in special short word history paragraphs.

GUIDE WORDS

To save you from having to search up and down page after page looking for the word you want, we have printed a pair of entry words in large type at the top of each page. The paired words are called **guide words**, and they guide you to the right page for finding your entry word. They are usually the alphabetically first and last main entry words on the page, and they let you know at a glance what words are on each page. By looking at the guide words and thinking about whether the word you are hunting will fit in alphabetically between them, you can quickly move from page to page until you find the right one.

Say, for example, you are looking up the word **array** and you have already turned to the section of words that begin with the letter **a**. You next would look at the guide words at the top of the pages. Let's take pages 25, 26, and 27 as a sample to see how the system works.

25 archway-armature

(first main entry at top of left-hand column)

arch-way \ 'ärch-wä \ *n* 1 : a passage under an arch 2 : an arch over a passage

(last main entry at bottom of right-hand column)

ar-ma-ture \ 'är-mə-cher \ *n* : the part of an electric motor or generator that turns in a magnetic field

On page 25 in this sample are the guide words **archway-armature**. You can see that **array** (arr-) comes after the last guide word, **armature** (arm-), so the page you want must be farther along.

27 arsenal-ascribing

(first main entry at top of left-hand column)

ar-se-nal \ 'ärs-nəl, -n-el \ *n* : a place where military equipment is made and stored

(last main entry at bottom of right-hand column)

as-scribe \ ə-'skrib \ *vb* **as-cribed**; **as-crib-ing** : to think of as coming from a specified cause, source, or author

On page 27 the guide words are **arsenal** and **ascribing**. Since **array** (arr-) comes before the first guide word here, **arsenal** (ars-), you know that you have gone too far.

armchair-arrowroot 26

(first main entry at top of left-hand column)

arm-chair \ 'ärm-,cheer, -,chaer \ *n* : a chair with arms

(last main entry at bottom of right-hand column)

ar-row-root \ 'ar-ō-,rūt, -,rūt \ *n* : a starch obtained from the roots of a tropical plant

The guide words on page 26 are **armchair** and **arrowroot**. You can see that **array** (arra-) comes before **arrowroot** (arro-) and after **armchair** (arm-), so you know the word you are looking for will be on page 26.

Now we said that the guide words are *usually* the first and last main entries on each page. But not always. You see, the guide words show you the alphabetically first and alphabetically last entry words on the page, and this includes every boldface entry. A guide word may be a main entry or a variant spelling, an inflected form, an undefined run-on entry, a defined run-on phrase, or even a run-in entry.

Look again at the guide words for page 27.

27 arsenal-ascribing

(first main entry at top of left-hand column)

ar-se-nal \ 'ärs-nəl, -n-el \ *n* : a place where military equipment is made and stored

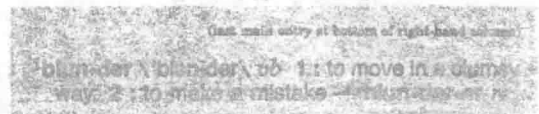
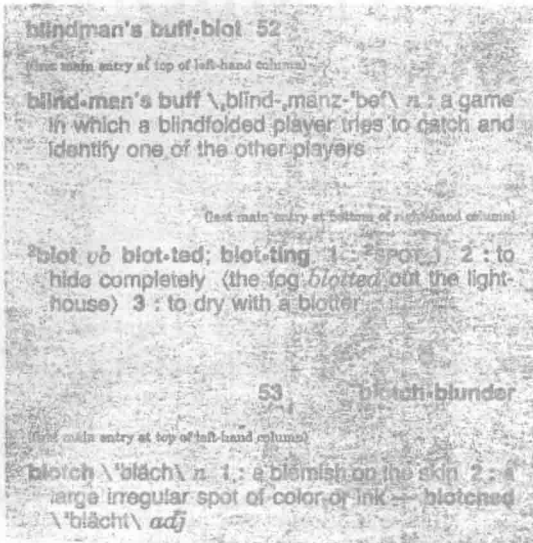
(last main entry at bottom of right-hand column)

as-cribe \ ə-'skrib \ *vb* **as-cribed**; **as-crib-ing** : to think of as coming from a specified cause, source, or author

Notice that **arsenal**, the first guide word is also the first main entry. The last main entry is **ascribe**, but the last guide word is **ascribing**, an inflected form. **Ascribing** is used as the last guide word on that page because it is the alphabetically last boldface word on the page, even though it is not a main entry.

Like the main entries in *Webster's Elementary Dictionary*, the guide words throughout the book are always in alphabetical order from page to page. Sometimes that presents a problem if a word that might normally be used as a guide word on one page is actually later in alphabetical order than the first guide word on the next page.

Look at the sample pages 52 and 53.



You have probably noticed that at the bottom of page 52 the inflection **blotting** is alphabetically later than the main entry **blot**. Yet **blot** is used as the second guide word for that page. If we had used **blotting** as a guide word, it would have been out of alphabetical order with **blotch**, the first main entry and first guide word on page 53. So in this instance we used **blot** and **blotch** as guide words on these two pages. If you happen to be looking for **blotting** and do not find it on page 53, just remember that we always keep guide words in alphabetical order, and this rule will help you find the right page.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS DICTIONARY

adj adjective
adv adverb
cap capitalized
conj conjunction
interj interjection
n noun

n pl noun plural
pl plural
prep preposition
pron pronoun
sing singular
vb verb

PRONUNCIATION SYMBOLS

a (called *schwa* \ 'shwǝ \) banana, collide, about; in stressed syllables as in humdrum, mother, about

er . . . further, learner

ə mat, mad, gag

ā day, fade, mate, vacation

ā bother, cat, cart

ā father as pronounced by those who do not rhyme it with *bother*. (Not everyone uses this sound.)

au . . . now, loud, out

b baby, rib

ch . . . chin, match, nature \ 'nā-cher \

d did, ladder

e bed, pet

ē beat, easy, me, carefree

f fifty, cuff, phone

g go, dig, bigger

h hat, ahead

hw . . . whale as pronounced by those who do not pronounce *whale* and *wait* the same

i bid, tip, banish, active

ī side, site, buy

j job, gem, judge

k kick, cook, ache

l lily, pool, cold, battle, metal

m murmur, dim, lamp

n no, own, cotton, maiden

ng . . . sing \ 'sing \, singer \ 'sing-er \, finger \ 'fing-ger \, ink \ 'ingk \

ō bone, know, soap

ó saw, all, moth, taut

ól . . . coin, destroy

p pepper, lip

r red, rarely, rhyme, car

s source, less

sh . . . shy, misalon, machine, special

t tie, attack, hot, water

th . . . thin, ether

th . . . this, either

ū rule, youth, few \ 'yū \, union \ 'yūn-yen \

û pull, wood, foot, cure \ 'kyūr \

v give, vivid

w we, away

y yet, you, cue \ 'kyū \, union \ 'yūn-yen \

yū . . . youth, union, cue, few, music

yū . . . cure, fury

z zone, raise

zh . . . violon, azure \ 'azh-er \

\ \ . . . slant lines used to mark the beginning and end of a pronunciation: \ 'pen \

' mark at the beginning of a syllable with primary (strongest) stress: \ 'pen-men \

ˈ mark at the beginning of a syllable with secondary (next-strongest) stress: \ 'pen-men-ship \

- a hyphen separates syllables in pronunciations.

, a comma separates pronunciation variants: \ 'rūm, 'rūm \

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