

# WEBSTER'S NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL DICTIONARY

*A Merriam-Webster*  
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**G. & C. MERRIAM CO., PUBLISHERS**  
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## PREFACE

This Webster's New Secondary School Dictionary is a new work in the Merriam-Webster series of dictionaries and a logical one to follow the Webster's Elementary Dictionary prepared for the preceding grades. This Merriam-Webster uses the pronunciation symbols that were first introduced in the Elementary Dictionary. The definitions and vocabulary have been expanded to meet the advanced requirements of the higher grades. The choice of words and senses has been based on their occurrence in over ninety per cent of all the textbooks now in use in the schools of the United States in the grades for which this dictionary has been prepared. In addition to this study of the words actually used in school textbooks, a number of word lists compiled by boards of education, city school systems, and testing bureaus have been carefully checked. Such reading and such checking have brought into this dictionary a remarkable increase of terms in biology, botany, chemistry, and physics as needed today by pupils ready for the study of high-school science. To this end especially, as well as to the general advance in these grades in all other subjects, we have gathered evidence for writing clear, simple, and accurate definitions.

Underneath this effort to make a dictionary specially for these grades lies solid ground. An editorial staff trained in methods that have been developed for over a century of good dictionary making has brought to this new book its experience as well as a fresh approach, and all the facilities that have produced other dictionaries in the Merriam-Webster series have been available and drawn upon for this one. Also in the background of these definitions lies a great deal of consultation with schoolteachers and principals (from whom we have received much generous advice) and of practical classroom experience in testing the definitions on pupils for whom they have been written.

The number of vocabulary entries in this dictionary is over 44,000. This number is large enough to cover usefully all the recurring school needs of pupils for whom the dictionary has been prepared. In addition to the defined terms a few thousand derivatives whose meaning is clear from a preceding definition are printed in boldface type as undefined run-ons. These are entered to show not only related use of basic meaning in a different function but also spelling and pronunciation. All the long-established prefixes and suffixes frequently used in English are entered at their alphabetical places in the vocabulary, explained, and exemplified. With a knowledge of these elements every user of this dictionary can extend his working vocabulary almost without limit.

The definitions are accompanied by over 800 black-and-white line drawings. These have been kept simple to serve their main purpose at a glance. Besides these pictorial illustrations, we have included many verbal illustrations of words as they combine with other words in phrases and sentences.

## Preface

This dictionary includes examples of some of the features of more advanced Merriam-Webster dictionaries. Over 500 simple etymologies, given in square brackets, introduce pupils to the fascinating study of word origins. The chosen etymologies represent most of the ways by which words have come into English from other languages and show also the backgrounds of certain groups of related words like days of the week and months of the year. Over 160 synonym paragraphs, given at the end of definitions, illustrate a method of discriminating between words of similar meaning (as *error*, *mistake*, and *blunder*). Over 200 usage labels in italics (as *archaic* at *afear'd*, *slang* at *ash can*, *Scottish* at *brae*) show how a dictionary informs users that some words are not standard or not used everywhere or on all occasions. Similarly about 500 usage notes, separated from the definition proper by brackets, a dash, or a fist, emphasize some interesting fact about syntax or grammar.

A section on the use of this dictionary comes right after this preface. It contains a large number of questions to be answered from information in the dictionary, and several sets of exercises to be written out so that the use of the dictionary can be thoroughly mastered. This matter lends itself to a variety of classroom lessons that can be assigned by a teacher to fit the needs of any class. It was designed to help the user of this dictionary to understand what is in it and to learn how to use it.

The back matter after the definitions contains in columns the names of the presidents and vice-presidents of the United States, the names of all the states and state capitals of the United States, the names of the nations of the world, and the names of all the cities of the world having a population of over 100,000 inhabitants. A pronunciation is given for all these names.

The plans for this dictionary were jointly agreed upon by the American Book Company and G. & C. Merriam Company. The reading and checking, the defining and editing, the proofreading and similar operations have been carried out by the permanent Merriam-Webster editorial staff.

G. & C. MERRIAM COMPANY

# ON USING YOUR DICTIONARY

## Looking up a word

A dictionary is — well, no, you're not going to be told. With one in your hands you can find out for yourself. Turn to the word *dictionary* in this book and see what information you can find there. Then try to answer these twenty-four questions. Refer to your dictionary for additional help if you need it. Even with the help of the dictionary you may find some questions difficult to answer. A few hard ones are answered for you.

1. Was it easy or hard for you to find the page on which *dictionary* is defined?
2. If it was easy, what made it easy?
3. Did the fact that a dictionary is "an alphabetically arranged book" help you find the right page quickly?
4. Once you had found the *d*'s, did you look at the guide words at the top of the pages?
5. What is the first guide word on page 225?
6. Is it the same as the first word defined on that page?
7. What is the second guide word on page 225? Is it one word or two? Are most guide words one word or two? Why is this one different from most guide words?
8. Do the guide words on page 225 tell you: (a) all the words that are defined on that page? (b) the most important words? (c) the first and last words defined on that page?
9. Suppose that you need to know how to spell the word *dictionary*. Suppose you have forgotten whether it ends with *ary* or *ery*. Would you need to read the pronunciation and the definitions, or would you get the correct spelling from the boldface entry word alone?
10. Suppose you need to know how to spell the plural of *dictionary*. Is it given in boldface type? Is it given in type as large as that used for *dictionary*?
11. Suppose you need to know where the word *dictionary* may be divided at the end of a line. How many centered dots do you find in the boldface type? At how many points can you divide the word *dictionary* at the end of a line?
12. How many syllables are there in *dictionary*?
13. Why isn't the last syllable of *dic-tion-ary*, represented by the letter *y*, separated from the next-to-last syllable by a centered dot, as

## On Using Your Dictionary

in *dic·ta·to·ri·al* and in *dic·ta·tor·ship*? This question is going to be answered for you, because this is probably the first dictionary you have used which shows you how to divide a word at the end of a line. Professional writers, printers, and typists do not carry a syllable of one letter to the next line. Since the final syllable of *dictionary* has only one letter, it should not be separated from the preceding syllable.

14. Suppose you need to know which syllable or syllables of *dictionary* should be stressed when the word is spoken. Do you find stress marks in the boldface type or in the type which immediately follows the boldface?
15. Upon which syllable of *dictionary* do you place the greatest stress in speech? Is the stress mark on this syllable placed high or low?
16. To which syllable of *dictionary* do you give a secondary or somewhat less than greatest stress in speech? Is the stress mark on this syllable placed high or low?
17. Which syllables of *dictionary* are unstressed? Do they have stress marks?
18. Does a stress mark, either high or low, precede the stressed syllable, or does the stress mark follow the stressed syllable?
19. Suppose you need to know whether the three-syllable pronunciation of *dictionary* \ˈdiksh-n-ri\, which is frequently used in British speech, is also commonly used in American speech. Is such a pronunciation listed?
20. Does the fact that \ˈdiksh-n-ri\ is not listed mean that this is an incorrect pronunciation? Again the answer is given to you. Since this pronunciation is very commonly used in Great Britain and is also used by some educated American speakers, it is a perfectly correct pronunciation. It is not, however, widely used in America. Since this dictionary emphasizes those pronunciations which are most frequently used by educated American speakers, you will not find it listed.
21. Suppose you need to know how *dictionary* is used in a sentence. Can it be used as a verb? What abbreviation tells you that this word is defined as a noun? What abbreviation would you expect to find if *dictionary* could be used as a verb?
22. Suppose you need to know the meaning or meanings of the word *dictionary*. How many numbered meanings are given for the word *dictionary*?
23. Which of the three meanings given best fits this book?
24. How well does the definition fit this dictionary?
  - (a) Is this book alphabetically arranged?
  - (b) Does this book list "the words of a language" or "some part" of those words?
  - (c) Does this book give the meanings of the words it lists?

- (d) Does this book glve spelling variations of some words?
- (e) Does this book give pronunciations?
- (f) Does this book give the etymology of some words? If *etymology* is an unfamiliar word to you, the best way to make it familiar is to look it up right now. After you have done that, you may be interested in some interesting examples of etymologies, such as those at *abject*, *bedlam*, *dandelion*, *G.I.*, and *radar*.

From the preceding twenty-four questions you should have become aware of certain features of this dictionary. It has been made to help you in these ways:

- ➔ to spell words
- ➔ to divide words at the ends of lines
- ➔ to pronounce words
- ➔ to know the parts of speech of words
- ➔ to know the meanings of words

Hundreds of thousands of dictionaries, exactly like this one, are in the hands of hundreds of thousands of students who are far from being exactly alike. How helpful this dictionary becomes to you depends upon how well you become acquainted with its features. The following sections have been prepared to help you become better acquainted with this dictionary and to provide you with practice in using it.

## Finding a word quickly

Whether you want to know the spelling of a word, its pronunciation, or its meaning, you should first know how to find that word quickly. How quickly you can find a word in an alphabetical list depends upon your skill in the use of alphabetical order. Expert users of a dictionary can open a dictionary surprisingly close to the right spot.

If *vagabond* is the word they seek, they do not waste time by flipping pages from the front of the dictionary toward the back. They open it near the section where all words beginning with *v* are located. An expert, with "educated thumbs", will not miss *vagabond* by more than twenty pages on his first try.

You can educate your thumbs to a degree of expertness that will save you many a precious second. Organize an educated-thumb contest. It is played by having a leader call out a letter — *f*, for example. All contestants, holding closed dictionaries in both hands, use their thumbs in an attempt to open the dictionary to a page somewhere within the *f*'s. The leading contestants are those who, on the first try, open their books to a page within the *f*'s, and the winner is the one who opens his book to the page closest to the page on which the *f*'s begin, page 293. The loser is the one who opens his book farthest from the winning page, perhaps somewhere in the *c*'s or *h*'s.

Expect, at first, to be wide of the mark. Expect someone to be lucky on the first few tries. But if you find a consistent winner, do not call him lucky. He has an educated thumb. Watch how he uses his thumbs. Have him explain how he does it, and don't take "I just seem to know" for an answer. Ask him "You just seem to know *what*?"



## On Using Your Dictionary

A consistent winner of educated-thumbs contests is usually one who has noticed that the words of a dictionary are not evenly distributed among the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. There are more words beginning with the letter *s*, for example, than there are words beginning with the twelve letters *g, j, k, l, n, o, q, u, v, x, y*, and *z* combined.

Once you have acquired an educated thumb, you need an educated eye to pick up guide words. These guide words are found at the top of every dictionary page except page 1. If the word you are seeking is *charlatan*, and if your educated thumb has opened the dictionary to page 121, where the guide words are *cavernous* and *cellar*, do you turn toward the front or toward the back of your dictionary? The student with the educated eye knows the answer. He has seen more than the first letter of the guide words. He knows that he must turn past this page of *ca* and *ce* words, the first *two* letters of its guide words *cavernous* and *cellar*, to a page having words beginning with *ch*.

Would you make the turn one page at a time or two or three pages at a time? If an expert user thinks he is only five or six pages away from the word he wants, he will quickly flip one page at a time to avoid the risk of overrunning his mark. If he thinks he is farther away, he will turn a few pages at a time.

What does a student with the educated eye look at as he approaches his target? He looks at guide words only, paying no attention to the list of words below them. If the word he seeks is *charlatan*, he looks for the first guide word he can find which begins with *cha*.

When he comes to page 124, where the guide words are *certificate* and *challenged*, he knows he is close to *charlatan*. He sees that *challenged* is the last word defined on this page and knows that *charlatan* must be on a later page. A glance at the next pair of guide words, *challenger* and *channel* on page 125, tells him that words beginning with *char* are not to be found there. When he sees on page 127 the guide words *charge* and *chase*, he knows right off that he has found the right page.

Up to this point he has wasted not a fraction of a second looking at the words below the guide words. Now, since he can see that the *g* in *charge* alphabetically precedes the *l* in *charlatan* and that the *s* in *chase* alphabetically follows the *r* in *charlatan*, he is certain that the word he seeks is either on this page or not in this dictionary at all. Now, and not until now, he glances at the top of both columns, just below the guide words, and his eye instantly falls on the word he seeks. If it had not been at the top, his "educated eye" would have skimmed down the column to find it within a second.

That is the way an expert user of a dictionary skillfully finds the word he seeks — quickly, efficiently. His skill is the result of practice, sometimes of laborious practice in alphabetizing lists of words. You can acquire that skill with a *little* laborious practice and more than a little competitive fun.

First, for the little bit of laborious practice. On fifty small slips of paper copy the first boldface word you find on fifty different pages of this dictionary. Now jumble these slips, and then put them in alphabetical order. Mix them up and put them back in order several times. As soon as you find yourself remembering the order of some of these words, use someone else's set.



If several students work together on this exercise, trading slips with each other, be sure that the sets are of different kinds. Some sets should be of words spaced far apart in the alphabet, whereas others should be of words as close alphabetically as those on a single page of this dictionary. These different sets will give you experience in alphabetizing by the first letter, by the first two letters, and on up to the first five and the first six letters, and as many more as you wish. By timing each other, you can find the alphabetizing champion.

All of this practice in making alphabetical lists is good preparation for an educated-eye contest, which is a real test of efficiency in using a list already alphabetized. For this contest, a leader begins by calling a page number, perhaps page 148. All contestants open their dictionaries to that page. Then, the leader calls out a word, perhaps *auxiliary*, and the contestants start hunting. The one who first starts to read the definition of *auxiliary* aloud is the winner. The winner *can* be one who by chance fumbles his way to the right page. But you surely know by now what kind of person is most likely to be a consistent winner.

Isn't it certain to be someone with an educated thumb, who consistently opens his book reasonably close to the right spot?

Isn't it certain to be someone with an educated eye, who depends upon guide words to find exactly the right page?

Isn't it certain to be someone who has practiced putting words in alphabetical order, not only by the first and second letters but also by the fifth or sixth and beyond?

Isn't it certain to be someone who takes pride in the degree to which he has acquired the skills of word finding?

You can be such a person, the kind who profits most from the use of a dictionary. For him a minute with the dictionary is a minute devoted to the word he has looked up, not to a back-and-forth search for the word itself.

Have you seen drivers who can back an automobile into a tight parking space, get out, mail a letter, and get back in and drive away while another driver is still stalled at an awkward angle from the curb? That expert driver was not born expert, and he did not become expert without practice. A similar difference exists among users of dictionaries, too. There are efficient dictionary users, and there are clumsy ones.

You do not doubt which kind of driver you would like to be, do you? You should not doubt, either, which kind of dictionary user you can be — clumsy or efficient. The choice is yours, and both choices have their price. The price of efficiency is a few hours of study and practice. The price of being clumsy is a lifetime of fumbling dissatisfaction.

### Using your dictionary as a guide to correct spelling

Three marks of a good speller are these: he knows when he is sure a word is spelled right; he knows when he is not sure; and he turns to his dictionary for help when he needs it. A good speller likes to have a dictionary beside him as he writes. A poor speller is on his way to become a good speller if he checks with his dictionary every time he writes.

## On Using Your Dictionary

Before dictionaries were published, people had to remember how to spell or put down some combination of letters that seemed right. Written language attempts to represent by letters the sounds which make our spoken words. The spelling of these words would be easy if each letter of the alphabet represented a single sound, but that is not the case. So our language has many pairs of words like *hair* and *hare*, which are spelled differently but pronounced alike, and words such as *cough*, *rough*, *bough*, *through*, and *though*, which look alike but have several different sounds.

Spelling is difficult. A writer is therefore dependent upon a reliable and up-to-date dictionary. In this dictionary turn to page 118 and look at the sixth entry in the second column. Note that you are given a choice of spellings, *catalog* or *catalogue*. Where two or more spellings are given for a word, all are correct. The spelling listed first is not "more correct" than the others, but usually it is the spelling most often found by the editors of this dictionary, who have counted the spelling preferences of many writers. When different spellings occur with almost equal frequency, the editors of this book have used their judgment on which should be placed first. The "*catalog* or *catalogue*" entry shows that the newer, shorter form has at last caught up with the older, longer form in frequency of use.

For a new spelling to become acceptable, it must first appear many times in writing that is careful in such matters as spelling. Widespread use of a new spelling by educated writers usually brings about general acceptance of the change in spelling. An accidental misspelling seldom does.

Which of the following spellings are, according to this dictionary, correct, and which are misspellings?

abridgment	abridgement	abrijment
accommodate	acommodate	accomodate
advertize	advertise	addvertise
advizor	advisor	adviser
airline	air line	air-line
anesthetic	anaesthetic	aenesthetic
athletic	athaletic	atheletic

A dictionary is also a useful guide to the spellings of plurals. In this dictionary, the plural form of a noun is shown only when the plural is irregular (formed other than by the addition of *s* or *es* to an unchanged singular).

What, according to this dictionary, are the plurals of the following words?

a	abscissa	agency	alumnus	antithesis
ability	acoustics	algebra	amp.	arch

For which of these ten words did this dictionary not show a plural form? Why not?

For which of these ten words is the plural form the same as the singular form?

When two plural forms are given in this dictionary, as is done for *abscissa* in the above list, both are correct. Whether one or the other is to be preferred often depends upon circumstances. A fisherman, for example, may pull in his net full of

*shrimp*. You may have *shrimps* for supper. You may call a handful of mushrooms you have just gathered *funguses*. In science class your teacher may expect you to call them *fungi*.

In addition to showing the spelling of irregular plurals, a dictionary also shows the spelling of the principal parts of verbs, when these spellings are formed other than by the addition of *ed* and *ing*.

In what way or ways, according to this dictionary, are the principal parts of the following verbs spelled?

arc	arouse	bat	bivouac	look
arise	atrophy	bite	level	picnic

No one wants to be a slave to a dictionary, and no one needs to be. There are a few principles of spelling, a few rules, which are well worth learning because they apply to many words. Study the following rules. Then, the next few times you turn to this dictionary for help with spelling, ask yourself, "Is there a rule that could be followed so that I would not have to turn to the dictionary?"

### Rules for spelling

Most words ending in *c* have a *k* inserted when a suffix beginning with *e*, *i*, or *y* is added, so that the *c* may not be pronounced like *s*; as, *colic*, *colicky*; *picnic*, *picnicked*, *picnicking*.

Words of one syllable and words having heavy stress on the last syllable, if they end in a single consonant (except *h* or *x*) preceded by a single vowel, double the consonant before a suffix beginning with a vowel; as, *plan*, *planned*, *planning*, *planner*; *hot*, *hotter*, *hottest*; *for'bid*, *for'bidden*, *for'bidding*. *Planned* and *hottest* would naturally be pronounced *plāned* and *hōtest* if the consonant were not doubled.

Words not having heavy stress on the last syllable, words ending in more than one consonant, and words ending in a single consonant preceded by more than one vowel, do not double the final consonant before a suffix beginning with a vowel; as, *'benefit*, *'benefited*; *fold*, *folded*; *need*, *needy*.

Exception: *l* is often doubled; as, *'rival*, *'rivalled* or *'rivalled*, *'rivaling* or *'rivalling*.

Words ending with silent *e* generally retain this *e* before suffixes beginning with a consonant; as, *pale*, *paleness*; *hate*, *hateful*; *chaste*, *chastely*; *move*, *movement*.

Exceptions: *whole*, *wholly*; *judge*, *judgment*; *due*, *duly*; *true*, *truly*.

Words ending with silent *e* generally drop the *e* before suffixes beginning with a vowel; as, *bride*, *bridal*; *guide*, *guidance*; *shape*, *shaping*; *move*, *movable*.

Exceptions: The *e* is retained in *hoeing*, *shoeing*, and *toeing* (from *hoe*, *shoe*, and *toe*). It is retained in *dyeing*, *singeing* (from *dye*, *singe*), and a few similar words, to distinguish them from *dying*, *singing* (from *die*, *sing*). Words ending in *ce* or *ge* retain the *e* before suffixes beginning with

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*a* or *o*; as, *peace*, *peaceable*; *change*, *changeable*. With derived words ending in *-able*, usage is divided in many words such as *usable*, *salable*, *blamable*.

Words ending in *ie* generally drop the *e* and change *i* to *y* when adding *-ing*, so as to prevent two *i*'s from coming together; as, *die*, *dying*.

Words ending in *y* preceded by a consonant usually change *y* to *i* before any suffix except one beginning with *i*; as, *pity*, *pitiful*.

Exceptions: (1) Adjectives of one syllable have comparative and superlative forms in both *-ier*, *-iest* and *-yer*, *-yest*; as, *dry*, *drier* or *dryer*, *driest* or *dryest*; *spry*, *sprier* or *spryer*, *spriest* or *spryest*. (2) Adjectives of one syllable usually retain the *y* before *-ly* and *-ness*; as, *shy*, *shyness*; *dry*, *dryly*. But *shily* and *drily* are also common.

Before *-ship* and *-like*, as *secretaryship*, *citylike*, and in derivatives formed from *baby* and *lady*, the *y* is retained. The *y* is also in the possessive of nouns; as, *everybody's*.

Words ending in *y* preceded by a vowel generally retain the *y* unchanged before all suffixes; as, *obey*, *obeying*; *joy*, *joyful*.

Exceptions: *day*, *daily*; *lay*, *laid*; *pay*, *paid*; *say*, *said*.

Words ending with a vowel sound generally retain the letter or letters representing such sound before a suffix beginning with a vowel; as, *agree*, *agreeable*, *agreeing*; *weigh*, *weighing*; *echo*, *echoed*; *bow*, *bowed*; *show*, *showy*.

### Using your dictionary as a guide to pronunciation

Your dictionary provides you with four kinds of help in the pronunciation of words.

First, many words have more than one of the units of pronunciation called syllables. In the pronunciation respellings of such words these syllables are separated by hyphens. The respelling is what you find in this dictionary between two marks of this shape: \.

The spelling of such a word is also regarded as composed of syllables. The dots (called centered dots) that you find in the boldface spellings are not there for the same reason as the hyphens in the respellings. The dots show the most desirable places to interrupt a word when the word is the last one in a line of writing or print but the line won't hold all of it. Many pronunciation syllables consist of only one sound, and many spelling syllables consist of only one letter. This is true of the first syllables of the pronunciation \ə-'flōt\ and of its spelling *a·float*. It is true of the last syllable of the pronunciation \ 'shō-ē\ and of its spelling *show·y*. But careful writers and printers would seldom put *a-* at the end of a line and *float* at the beginning of the next. And they would never put *show-* at the end of a line and *y* at the beginning of the next. Therefore this dictionary does not show any dot in the spelling *afloat* or in the spelling *showy*. Do not, then, expect in all cases to find the same number of dots in the spelling as there are hyphens in the respelling. The hyphen is the proper guide to the syllables of the spoken word.

Second, since some syllables are spoken with greater emphasis than others, this emphasis, sometimes called accent and sometimes called stress, is shown in this dictionary by the stress marks which precede an accented syllable. Primary, or

strongest, accent is shown by a stress mark placed high and in front of a syllable, as in *debate* \dē-'bāt\ and *stingy* \ˈstɪn-jē\. Secondary, or somewhat less than strongest, accent is shown by a second stress mark placed low and in front of a syllable, as in the last syllable of *rattlesnake* \ˈrat-l-,snāk\.

Third, some syllables consist of a single sound but most syllables consist of more than one sound. To represent these sounds this dictionary uses the thirty-nine symbols that appear on the inside front cover of this book and again inside the back cover. Suppose you did not know whether *seine* rhymes with *seen*, *sane*, *sign*, or *den*. The letters *ei* cannot tell you, since they spell the sound of *ē* in *seize*, of *ā* in *vein*, of *ī* in *height*, and of *e* in *heifer*. To learn the sound represented by *ei* in *seine* you either need to hear the word spoken by someone who knows how to pronounce it or you need to turn to your dictionary, which shows that the pronunciation is \ˈsān\.

The dictionary can help you to learn the correct pronunciation of a word only if you are familiar with the symbols used to indicate pronunciations. If you know that the pronunciation symbol *ā* (called bar a) represents the sound of the vowel in *age* and *vein*, you then know that the same symbol in \ˈsān\ represents the same vowel sound. The word *seine* therefore rhymes with *sane*.

Fourth, your dictionary provides you with information about variations in the pronunciation of some words. The word *abdomen*, for example, is pronounced either \ˈab-də-mən\ or \ˈab-ˈdō-mən\. If you pronounce this word in either of these ways, there is no reason for you to change your pronunciation just because someone else pronounces it the other way. It is always a good idea to check with your dictionary before you jump to the conclusion that your own or somebody else's pronunciation is not correct.

Many words have more than one acceptable pronunciation. The pronunciation shown first in this dictionary is not necessarily better. Its being first sometimes means that it is the pronunciation most frequently used by educated speakers. On the other hand, in many cases usage is evenly divided, and the placing of a pronunciation first may mean only that it is at least as frequently used as any pronunciation that follows it. Your pronunciation of *tomato* depends upon the pronunciation you have heard since you first became acquainted with the word. Whether your pronunciation of *tomato* is listed first or third, it is a standard, acceptable pronunciation, and there is no reason for you to change it to something that sounds strange to you.

How effective your dictionary is in helping you with these four elements of pronunciation — syllabication, stress, sounds represented by letters, and acceptable variations in pronunciation — depends upon how well you know the symbols used to indicate these elements. The next four sections have been designed to help you become familiar with all of them.

## Syllables

A few paragraphs back we mentioned that this dictionary shows two kinds of syllables — syllables in the ordinary spelling and syllables in the respellings or pronunciations. Read that section again.

## On Using Your Dictionary

In the vocabulary on page 1 you will find the entry **ab-bre-vi-a-tion** \ə-,brē-vē-'āsh-n\. The hyphens between the slants mean that the word has five syllables when it is spoken. The centered periods in the boldface spelling mean that the word can be divided at any one of four places at the end of a line. In the vocabulary you will also find **idea** \ī- dē-ə\. The hyphens show that the spoken word has three syllables. The complete absence of centered periods in the spelling **idea** means that the word should not be divided at the end of a line. Neither possibility (*i-* and *dea*, *ide-* and *a*) is considered good by careful dividers.

You should be interested in written syllables only when you have need to divide a word at the end of a line. You should not give these syllables in boldface type so much as a glance when you are seeking the spoken syllables of a word.

Pay close attention to the syllables between the slant lines when you are trying to find out the pronunciation of a word. But pay no attention to these syllables when you are dividing a spelling at the end of a line. For one thing, if you were led by \ī-'dē-ə\ at **idea** to divide this word between the *i* and the *d*, or between the *e* and the *a*, you would be using an undesirable division. For another thing, the two kinds of division often do not match each other very closely. This is the case, for instance, at **pre-cious** \'presh-əs\. When *e* is pronounced as it is in this word, it is commonly followed by one or more other sounds in the same syllable, in both the respelling and the spelling, as in **ven-om** \'ven-əm\. But if *c* were placed in the same syllable with *e* in **precious**, the resulting **prec-ious** would suggest a pronunciation \'pres-ē-əs\, which does not occur.

### The syllables of spoken English

The syllabic divisions and the stress marks have been omitted from the pronunciation representations of the following words. Copy these representations and, without referring to your dictionary, divide them into syllables. Then check with your dictionary to see how well developed your syllabic sense is.

magnet \magnət\	matter \matr\	miser \mīzr\
magnetic \magnetik\	maximum \maksmə\	munition \myūnīshn\
magneto \magnētō\	measles \mēzlz\	mutual \myūchəwəl\
mathematics \mathmatiks\	melancholy \melənkälē\	muzzle \mæzl\

From this exercise you should have observed that most but not all syllables contain a vowel sound, either with or without one or more consonant sounds. Syllables which do not contain a vowel sound contain one of the consonants *l*, *m*, *n*, or *r*, called syllabic consonants. These syllabic consonants are found only in unstressed syllables (in 'shōf-r but not in shō-'fər, for example). A syllabic consonant may be the only sound in a syllable or there may be other consonants in the syllable: \'kat-l\ (*cattle*), \'mēz-lz\ (*measles*).

Specialists in the subject of pronunciation often hear a pronunciation in the same way but disagree in their representation of the pronunciation. In many cases one representation is as good as the other. There is a great deal of such disagreement in the indication of syllable boundaries in respellings, and in the matter of whether to choose a syllabic consonant or a vowel plus a consonant in indicating the sounds in many unstressed syllables.

Both of these types of disagreeing treatment can be illustrated by any of a large number of single words — *tribal*, for instance. An examination of a large number of pronouncing dictionaries shows the pronunciation of this word represented in a variety of ways. Here are four: (1) with *b* at the end of the first syllable and with no vowel in the second syllable; (2) with *b* at the end of the first syllable and with a vowel in the second syllable; (3) with *b* at the beginning of the second syllable and with no vowel after it; (4) with *b* at the beginning of the second syllable and with a vowel after it. If A saw \ˈtrīb-l\ in a book, B saw \ˈtrīb-əl\, C saw \ˈtrī-bl\, and D saw \ˈtrī-bəl\, and each was asked to pronounce the representation in his book, the pronunciations of all four would sound identical to a listener. In other words, there is frequently more than one good way of reaching the same goal, and a difference of practice in these matters does not necessarily mean that one way is right and another is wrong.

On the other hand, you should not conclude that it is safe for you to take liberties with the syllable divisions in the pronunciations in your dictionary. The sound *t*, for instance, behaves in a very troublesome way, and if you ignored \ə-ˈtäm-ik\ at *atomic* and decided that \ət-ˈäm-ik\ would do just as well, you would probably produce a pronunciation that would sound very strange. The *t* and the *r* of words like *citric* and *metric* are further examples of the troublesome behavior of *t*. There is a widely held belief that a “short” vowel must have at least one consonant after it in the same syllable if that syllable is stressed, and many books put the *t* of words like *citric* and *metric* at the end of the first syllable. However, the *t* and the *r* of such words sound more like the *t* and *r* of *trick* than like the *t* and *r* of *pot roast*, and this book therefore pronounces these words \ˈsi-trik\ and \ˈme-trik\, with *t* and *r* in the same syllable.

Write your answers to the following questions, and then check your answers with your dictionary.

1. Does *adenoids* have two spoken syllables or three?
2. Does *alien* have two spoken syllables or three?
3. Does *American* have three spoken syllables or four?
4. Does *athlete* have two spoken syllables or three?
5. Does *forecastle* have two spoken syllables or three?
6. Does *giant* have one spoken syllable or two?
7. Does *patio* have two spoken syllables or three?
8. Does *ratio* have two spoken syllables or three?

Do you find, as you check with your dictionary, that some of these words may be syllabicated in more than one way?

Is it clear to you now that syllabic sense is necessary to the correct pronunciation of words?

Is it clear to you that the spelling of a word is not a sure guide to its syllabication?

Is it clear to you that you should always look for spoken syllables within the slant lines of the pronunciation, never within the boldface entry?



**The three degrees of stress**

When you read poetry aloud, you can usually notice that the sounds of the words fall into a regular pattern of emphasized and unemphasized syllables. If you have written poetry, you are probably even more aware of this rhythm, and you know how dissatisfied you are with a line in which emphasis is unnaturally forced upon a syllable.

“Oh come with me”,  
She said with glee,  
“And you will be  
Very happy”!

That last line is about as bad as verse can get because the rhythmic beat of the preceding lines forces an unnatural stress upon the second and fourth syllables. The point, of course, is that spoken words, in or out of verse, have a rhythm of their own. If that rhythm, which is produced by a combination of strongly stressed, moderately stressed, and weakly stressed syllables, is preserved, the words sound “right” when heard by another person. If that rhythm is changed, the words sound “wrong”. Stress, or accent, is therefore a very important element of pronunciation.

The three degrees of stress — strong, medium, and weak — are found in the word *indicate* \‘in-də-ˌkāːt\, in which the first syllable is given strong stress (by the mark ‘), the last syllable is given medium stress (by the mark ˌ), and the middle syllable is given weak stress (by the absence of any stress mark). Strong stress is also called primary stress, medium stress is also called secondary stress, and a syllable with weak stress is also said to be without stress or to be unstressed. Observe that the stress mark is at the beginning of the syllable that it goes with.

Some words, such as *indicate* and *davenport*, contain all three degrees of stress. Some, such as *dangerous* and *physician*, contain only two degrees, primary and weak. Some words, such as *doorstep* and *knighthood*, contain only two degrees, primary and secondary. Some monosyllables, such as *glue*, have primary stress; others, such as *a*, usually have weak stress. The word *a* has weak stress in “I’ll give you a dollar”, and primary stress in “I’ll give you *a* dollar, not two dollars”.

Stress is extremely important in the difference between correct and incorrect pronunciation of many words. Copy the following pronunciation representations, adding the missing stress marks. Then check your marks with those of this dictionary.

celebrate \sel-ə-brāt\	chamois \sham-ē\	circulate \sərk-yə-lāt\
celebration \sel-ə-brāsh-n\	champion \champ-ē-ən\	circulation \sərk-yə-lāsh-n\
celebrity \sə-leb-rət-ē\	chaperon \shap-r-ən\	convict ( <i>verb</i> ) \kən-vikt\
chameleon \kə-mēl-yən\	chauffeur \shōf-r, shō-fər\	convict ( <i>noun</i> ) \kän-vikt\

Does the stress change in *chaperon* when the spelling is changed to *chaperone*? Does it change when *chaperon* is used as a verb?

Is the stressed syllable in *convict*, the noun, the same as the stressed syllable in *convict*, the verb?

What is meant by the placement of the two pronunciations of *chauf-feur*? Is \ʃhōf-r\ placed first to show that it is the better of the two?

Some people stress the second syllable of *champion*, instead of the first. Is their pronunciation recognized by this dictionary?

Do you find evidence in these three related words — *celebrate*, *celebration*, and *celebrity* — that it is unsafe to assume that the heaviest stress in an unknown word is on the same vowel as in a known word which is similar in spelling?

### The symbols of pronunciation

On the inside front and back covers of this dictionary you will find a list of pronunciation symbols, most of which look like familiar letters of the alphabet. True, they have the shape of letters, but they are not letters.

The symbol *a*, for example, is the symbol of a single sound, the sound of the vowel in *mat*, *map*, and *add*.

The letter *a*, on the other hand, represents not only the sound of the vowel in *map*, but also the very different vowel sounds found in *made*, *father*, and the second syllable of *sofa*, and no sound whatever in *dead*.

Whereas many of the letters of the alphabet may be used to represent any of several sounds, each pronunciation symbol represents only one sound.

No one seeing the word *colonel* for the first time would be likely to guess that its pronunciation is identical with that of *kernel*. Look up both words in this dictionary to see how their pronunciation is indicated. Are you convinced that the letters of the alphabet are not a reliable guide to the pronunciation of a word? Are you convinced that, for a guide to pronunciation, we need a set of symbols each of which is limited to a single sound?

If the sign \$ makes you think of nothing but a capital S with two lines drawn through it, you do not recognize it as a symbol. But if \$ immediately, instantaneously, makes you think of dollars, you have learned to use this sign as a symbol.

So it is with all the pronunciation symbols on the inside covers of this dictionary. If you look at ə and think "That's the letter *e* upside down", ə has no value for you as a symbol of pronunciation. But if you think instantaneously of the sound represented by ə, the most frequently used vowel sound in our language, then ə has meaning for you as a symbol.

The letter *s* is pronounced in several different ways, and in some words is not pronounced at all. For instance, in each of the first four of the following words the letter *s* has a different pronunciation, and in the last word it has no sound: *sun*, *easy*, *sure*, *vision*, *island*. The pronunciation symbol *s* and the letter *s* have the same form. If the symbol makes you think only of the letter, it does not have value for you as a symbol. But if the symbol *s* makes you think instantaneously of the sound of the *s* in *school* \ʃkü\, of the sound of the *sc* in *science* \sī-ən(t)s\, of the sound of the *c* in *cell* \sel\, of the sound of the *ce* in *rice* \rīs\, and of the last sound in *tax* \taks\ and *quartz* \kwōrts\, *s* does have value — a single value — for you as a pronunciation symbol.

The thirty-nine pronunciation symbols listed on the inside covers of this dic-