

Concise Dictionary of American Grammar and Usage

Edited by

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Foreword

This *Concise Dictionary* is primarily a manual for people who aspire to write a clear and forceful American in accord with current good use. It has grown out of our *Little Dictionary of English Usage* (1946) but differs from that earlier handbook in emphasis and content because this new book includes a considerable number of words and phrases which lately have become current in the United States or have acquired new meanings in recent years. The aim here is to be positive, not negative. Conservative schoolmasters who have written about grammar and diction in the past have devoted much space to condemnation of turns of phrase which seemed to violate accepted principles or old rules of grammar or rhetoric. In this word-book, on the contrary, we endeavor to recommend effective new modes of expression which have the approving stamp of use by good writers of our own day. Many words formerly regarded as slang or vulgarisms are now accepted as good colloquial American; others formerly colloquial, familiar, or informal have become standard literary diction. Such changes in the standing of words we have indicated in several instances derived from our authorities or our own observation of the present practice of good writers and speakers. Many of our statements concerning grammatical usages are made after consulting Otto Jespersen's *Essentials of English Grammar* (1933), George O. Curme's *Syntax* (1931), H. W. Fowler's *Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926), *Webster's New International Dictionary*, second edition (1934), and the *American College Dictionary* (1947).

In order that our guidebook may be as dependable as possible we have freely made use of the works of recognized authorities. We are especially indebted to George Philip Krapp's *The English Language in America* (1925), *The Knowledge of English* (1927), and *A Comprehensive Guide to Good English* (1927), Arthur G. Kennedy's *Current English* (1935), and H. T. Horwill's *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage* (1935), as well as the revised edition of H. L. Mencken's *The American Language* (1936) and *The American Language, Supplements One and Two* (1945, 1948). We have also turned to *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (1941) by Dan S. Norton and Peters Rushton for help in defining critical terms and to *Current English Usage* (1935) by Sterling Andrus Leonard, the *American English Grammar* (1940) of Charles C. Fries, and *British and American English Since 1900* by Eric Partridge and John W. Clark for stimulating sugges-

tions on many debatable points. The *Dictionary of Americanisms* of the Chicago University Press is the standard background word-book.

Because of limitations of space we have avoided including in our list the most common words and, at the other extreme, many highly technical terms which are new, to be sure, but are not in general use. On the other hand, we have tried to explain American terms which might puzzle visitors from Australia, Canada, or other parts of the British Commonwealth, and we have warned our American readers against some of the expressions which are polite enough in America but are vulgar or improper in the United Kingdom. Our basis for selection has been eclectic, and usefulness has been our prime objective.

For college freshmen or other students of the art of composition, our *Dictionary* constitutes a combined handbook of diction, grammar, and rhetoric. It enables the theme-writer to turn to a general discussion of the type or genre of writing in which he is interested, a solution of the problem of punctuation that troubles him, or a definition of the word that he may have misused. To the instructor or theme-reader it affords the greatest possible freedom in the use of signs and abbreviations for textual emendation. He need not commit to memory or assign to his students for rote memorization a set of symbols or a chart. All he has to do is to write in the margin of a theme the first letters of the name of the fault or the rhetorical principle on which his student must seek enlightenment. The abecedarian arrangement of the *Dictionary* does the rest. Thus he might write *Syl* in the margin when the word at the end of a line is wrongly divided, and so refer the student to the entry regarding Syllabication. Or he might simply underline a word or phrase the use of which is discussed in the *Dictionary*, adding such a marginal notation as *sl.* for *slang* or *colloq.* for *colloquial*.

But the theme-reader may conveniently use conventional proofreader's marks if he prefers to do so. Many of these are included in the alphabetical series under the heading of "Signs and Symbols"; such, for example, are || meaning *not parallel* and # asking for more space. Others like the delete sign (s) and l.c., *lower case*, are listed separately.

In discussing such matters of mechanical procedure as capitalization, spelling, and compounding, we have endeavored to follow the recommendations of the *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual* (1945) unless we have seen strong reason for contrary suggestions.

In general we have devoted little of our limited space to historical or critical discussion of the changes in meanings of words. But if the origin or development of a word seemed very remarkable or oddly related to present American use, we have indicated the etymology briefly within square brackets [] after the definition. In choosing between contradictory etymologies we have leaned conservatively toward Skeat's *Etymological Dic-*

tionary of the English Language, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and the smaller dictionaries published in America by the John C. Winston Company, rather than toward the interpretations of the popular experts in semasiology.

The alphabetical sequence in the text includes concise articles on grammatical and stylistic topics ("Letters," for example), as well as a large number of brief vocabulary items. The short entries concerned with the current usage of individual terms are typically arranged as follows: First is the word itself in boldface type with its principal parts if it is an irregular verb, comparison if it is an unusual adjective or adverb, variant spellings if any variants are in general use. Italicized abbreviation indicates the part or parts of speech in which the word may be used. Next come the definitions. If in the first of the senses given the word under discussion is not standard American English, an italicized abbreviation preceding the definition indicates a practical classification as slang, colloquial, archaic, or British. Acceptable meanings of the term are presented with commas separating synonyms but semicolons separating distinct definitions. For a few words commonly mispronounced, however, we have indicated acceptable pronunciations in parentheses before the definitions. In these instances the diacritical marks used are:

ā ē ī ō ū ōō (skāte, ēve, ice, nōte, mūte, mōōt)

ǎ ě ĭ ǒ ů ōō (šǎck, nĕck, sīt, nŏt, cŭt, cŏok)

ǎ as in pǎrt; ǎ as in ǎsk (in New England); oi ou aw (boil, bout, bawl)

The unmarked vowels are mute e's; e.g., the *a* in China.

Abbreviations used in the text include:

abbr. abbreviation, abbreviated
adj. adjective
adv. adverb
Am. American, Americanism, of the United States
arch. archaic, antiquated
Br. British, Britishism
colloq. colloquial, colloquially
conj. conjunction
dial. dialect, dialectal
Du. Dutch, Netherlandish
fig. figurative
Fr. French
Ger. German, Germanic
Gr. Greek
gram. grammar, grammatical
interj. interjection
L. Latin
LL. late Latin

n. noun
OE. Old English, Anglo-Saxon
OF. Old French
p. past, preterit
part. participle, participial
pl. plural
prep. preposition, prepositional
pron. pronoun
q.v. which see
sing. singular
sl. slang
sp. spelled, spelling
stand. lit. standard literary language or usage
tech. trade or technical term
v. verb
v.i. intransitive verb
v.t. transitive verb

In the course of years, we have gratefully received helpful suggestions from many associates. Two whose assistance has been especially valuable are Dr. George A. Finch of Pratt Institute and Lt. Col. Victor H. Streit, U.S.M.C. Ret.

R.C.W.

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Concise Dictionary of American Grammar and Usage

A

abandon, desert, forsake, v. When one gives something up completely, especially when he leaves it to the mercy of someone or something, he *abandons* it. When he quits something (except a place) in violation of legal or moral claims upon him, he *deserts* it. When he leaves something familiar or someone dear to him, he *forsakes* it or him. "*Abandon* a ship; *desert* one's regiment; *forsake* one's children."

Abbreviation. Shortened or contracted form of word or phrase; e.g., *C.O.D.* Mainly used in reference citations, tabulated matter, and technical writing.

abecedarian, adj. Alphabetical; childishly simple. An *abecedarian* poem is one consisting of twenty-six lines, beginning with the letters of the alphabet in order.

abhorrence, n. Loathing; hatred.

ability, capacity, n. *Ability* means the power of putting physical or mental energy to use; *capacity*, the power of receiving and holding ideas. "He is a man of great *capacity* but of little *ability*."

A-bomb, n. Atom bomb; missile causing devastation by setting off a chain of molecular fission.

a-borning, adv. Colloq., in the process of being born.

about, adv. Colloq., in the sense of *almost*, as in "She was *about* ready to cry"; *near*, as in "They looked to see whether there was anyone *about*"; and *in active pursuit of duties*, as in "He is not yet up and *about*."

above, prep. Can be used as an *adj.*, as in "the *above* statement," but this is not recommended for any except the most humdrum and mechanical of contexts. On

a level with *inst.*, *ult.*, *prox.*, in letters. Substitute the preceding, the foregoing, the matter already referred to.

abri (à brê'), *n.* Shelter; dugout; hut. [*Fr.* shelter.]

absenteeism, n. Frequent absence from work. "*Absenteeism* cuts down production."

Absolute Construction. Participial phrase or equivalent not formally connected with the main clause. "She stood there, *arms akimbo and head back*" for "She stood there *with* her arms *akimbo* and head back." Sometimes called the nominative absolute because the noun in the phrase is felt to be in the nominative case. "*He being tired and I fresh*, everybody insisted on my going." "*These difficulties being evident*, the diplomats proceeded cautiously." A literary rather than a *colloq.* construction, and one to be handled with discretion.

absquatulate, v. Arch. colloq., depart, get up and go.

abstention, n. Refraining; refraining from voting.

Abstract. Abstract terms such as *goodness*, *equality*, *nature*, and so on are symbols of general ideas and qualities. Their function is to fix a concept until a more definite content can be given to it by concrete particulars. If not given this content, the abstract term is likely to be vague or evasive and can be manipulated dishonestly. As a rule, it is **more** effective to present material in concrete or **specific** than in abstract or general terms.

accede, v. Attain; give adherence, used with *to*.

accent, v. Stress, give prominence to.

Accent. Stress laid upon a syllable of a

word or part of a phrase or sentence. Variation in accent often distinguishes nouns from verbs, *con'duct, n., conduct', v.*; and nouns from adjectives, *min'ute, n., minute', adj.*

accent, accentuate, v. Choose the latter when the sense is figurative. "Poverty *accentuates* the other forms of human misfortune." "He *accented* the wrong syllable."

accept, except, v. *Accept* means take; *except*, as transitive, exclude, bar, omit, and as intransitive, take exception to. "I *accept* your terms but wish to *except* item four from the list."

accidentally, adv. Casually, by chance.

accommodate, v. Bring into agreement; provide with something needed, help out; furnish living quarters for.

accompanied by, with. *By* is nearly always used unless the idea is that of combining or supplementing. "She was *accompanied* by a crowd of admirers," but "She *accompanied* the words *with* a knowing smile."

accord, n. Agreement, concurrence; unofficial agreement between representatives of states or nations.

accord, v. Grant, award; agree [*L.*, to the heart].

account, v. With *to, for*, and (in the passive) *of*, but does not admit of *as* before the complement of *account*. Write "I *account* it (not *it as*) a stroke of luck."

ace, n. Playing card Number One of a suit, card of highest value in many games; expert; combat pilot who has shot down a certain number of enemy planes. The *pl. aces* is slang as an *adj.* meaning highly esteemed.

acquaint, v. Make known, make to know, used with *with*.

acquaintance, n. Personal knowledge; a person one has met but does not know intimately.

acquaintanceship, n. Personal knowledge; *Br.* substitute for *acquaintance*.

acquainted as an adj., familiar, on friendly terms, is *Am. colloq.*

acquiesce, v. Rest satisfied with, idiomatically used with *in*.

acquire, attain, obtain, procure, v. To *acquire* is to take on or to gain possession of, usually by one's own exertions. To *attain* is to arrive at, touch upon. To *obtain* is to get a desired thing. To *procure* is to get by search or request. "*Acquire* knowledge, *attain* a goal, *obtain* a position, *procure* a specimen."

acre, n. Land measure of 4,840 square yards. The *abbr. a.* should be used but rarely.

acronym, n. Name coined as an acrostic, combining initials or initial syllables of the words in a long name or title. See *radar, Unesco*, for example.

across, adv. and prep. To the opposite side. To put an idea *across* is *colloq.* metaphor from the theatrical performer's obligation to send his effects across to the audience on the other side of the footlights.

acrost, adv. and prep. *Vulgar*, across.

acrostic, n. Set of lines in which initial letters spell out a message; similar poem or series of prose lines in which final letters make a word or message.

act, n. Deed; *tech.* in literary criticism, major division of a play. A Roman tragedy regularly consisted of five *acts*.

Action or Plot. In the narrative the incidents should be arranged in the order of increasing interest. All the details requisite to an understanding of the story must be given before the climax is reached, but there must be no anticlimax. The action should progress steadily and fairly rapidly, and lead directly to the point of culmination. Having made the most of the climax, the author should end the story while the reader's interest is still alive.

activate, v. Charge with chemical energy; make ready for work; organize a military unit for active duty.

actual, adj. Real; being done.

ad, n. The handy *colloq.* stump of *advertisement*. *Ad-writer, want-ad, ad-man, etc.*, are *trade or tech.* (journalism).

addicted, devoted, part., adj. *Addicted* means inclined or given to a practice or habit or pursuit (often bad); *devoted*, habitually attached to something or someone

AMERICAN GRAMMAR AND USAGE

(always taken in a good sense). "*Devoted* to music, *addicted* to smoking."

adherent, *adj.* Closely connected; sticking to; so placed as to indicate close connection. An adjective preceding a noun is in the *adherent* position.

adherent, *n.* Partisan, loyal follower.

Adjective. The name of something presented as a quality or attribute.

Adjective and Adverb. Do not mistake an *adj.* for an *adv.* It is sometimes difficult to tell them apart because many words can be used as either without change of form. The tendency is to use the shorter form, which is frequently, although not always, the *adj.*

Do not write:

considerable	<i>for</i> considerably
powerful	<i>for</i> powerfully
real	<i>for</i> really
sure	<i>for</i> surely

After verbs like *look, sound, feel, taste, smell*, use the *adj.* except in the rare cases when an *adv.* of manner is needed to describe the action of the *v.* "The persimmon tastes *sour* (not *sourly*)."

For adjectives that may stand for adverbs, see **Quasi Adverbs**.

adjust, *v.* Make exact, bring to agreement; psychological *tech.*, arrive at improved relationship with environment.

ad-lib, *v.* *Theatrical tech.*, talk freely, improvise instead of reciting memorized lines. [*L.*, at pleasure.]

administer, *v.* Manage; give as medicine.

administrate, *v.* *Bureaucratic jargon*, administer.

admissible, *adj.* Worthy to be allowed, acceptable as evidence.

admit, *v.t.* Let in, concede, own, confess. As *v.i.* it is used with *to* in the sense of give entrance or access, and with *of* in the sense of permit, allow, grant. The construction with *of* is limited to use with impersonal subjects. Write "His absolute sincerity *admits of* no question," not "He *admits of* no question concerning his sincerity."

advantage, *n.* With *over* or *of* when the meaning is superiority, stronger position, mastery; with *of* when the meaning is gain, profit, opportunity, or circumstance espe-

cially favorable to a desired end. "The man who can think has the *advantage over* the man who can only remember." "He took *advantage of* my ignorance." "You have the *advantage of* me" often means "You know me but I do not know you," i.e., you are no acquaintance of mine. The *adj.* is *advantageous*.

adventurer, *n.* Soldier of fortune; man willing to undertake hazardous enterprises.

adventuress, *n.* Wily woman seeking to attain wealth or power by dubious devices.

Adverbs. In conversation, the tone of the voice helps to indicate the idea to be limited by an adverb; in writing, position is everything. Yet even in the best literary style such adverbs as *only* need not always precede what they modify. Thus in "We *only* had two sandwiches left," where the *adv.* is in the preverbal position, there is no ambiguity. But in "I *only* shot a dozen ducks" or "I *only* hired the healthy," where *only* is in the same position, the idea is not expressed clearly. Whether a certain position is correct or not depends largely upon the phrase in which the *adv.* occurs, but, of course, an *adv.* should in general stand as near as possible to the word it modifies.

Some adjectives can be made into adverbs by adding *-ly*. But do not forget that some adverbs do not end in *-ly*: *slow, fast, much, first*. There is an *adv. slowly*, but *fastly* and *muchly* are *vulgar*. Note the difference between *sharp* and *sharply* in "The play begins at 8:40 *sharp*" and "He turned *sharply* to the left." Usually some such distinction in meaning as this is necessary to keep the short and the *-ly* form of the same *adv.* in active use.

adverse, *adverse*, *adj.* *Adverse*, hostile, not conducive to success, unfavorably disposed. "These *adverse* circumstances did not deter him." *Averse*, having a dislike of or an aversion to. "They were *averse to* a peaceful settlement of the question." Do not write *averse from*.

advise, *v.* *Trade or tech.* (business) in the sense of say, tell, inform.

adviser, *n.* Consultant; counselor. Ad-

visor is a variant spelling preferred in some types of educational counseling.

advisory, *adj.* Concerned with or containing advice or counsel. *n.* Bulletin of advice.

aegis (ē'jīs), *n.* Ancient Greek accouterment or shield; a shield or protection. A poeticism as used with *under* in newspapers in the sense of *auspices*, *patronage*, *care*, or in place of *for*. "The girls are selling cookies *under the aegis of* (better *for*) the Dog Club."

aerodrome, *n.* Airfield; large hangar for storage of planes or dirigibles.

aesthetic, *adj.* (also *sp. esthetic*). Pertaining to beauty, sensitive to or possessing a sense of beauty. A man or a movement may be *aesthetic*, but the term is not a substitute for *beautiful*. Write "a *beautiful* picture or town" not "an *aesthetic* picture or town."

affect, effect, *v.* *Affect* means to act on, feign, cultivate, make an ostentatious display of liking; *effect*, to bring about, accomplish. "The bad news *affected* him deeply." "He *effected* an opening somehow." The *n. affect* is obsolete except *trade* or *tech.* (psychological term for feeling, emotion, or desire). The *n. effect*, meaning result, purport, impression is, of course, in good use.

affix, *v.* Fasten (to); attach; append.

affix (ă'fix), *n.* Prefix or suffix; something attached.

after. Not needed with a *p. part.*, as in "Having come (not *after* having come) as far as St. Charles, we had just as well go on to St. Louis."

agendum, *pl. agenda*, *n.* Something that must be done; *pl.*, items of work for a meeting of a committee or a deliberative or legislative body.

aggravate, *v.* Increase in weight or seriousness. "His mental condition *aggravates* the disease." In the sense of *exasperate*, *annoy*, *provoke*, it is chiefly *dial.* "That merchant's method of dealing with customers *aggravates* (better *irritates*) me."

aggregate, *n.* Mass or sum of many particulars; *tech.*, hard material in lumps of graduated sizes used in mixture with ce-

ment to form concrete. The sum of several amounts of money is a total rather than an *aggregate*.

aggregate, *v. Colloq.* meaning to reach in the aggregate to. "That makes it *aggregate* (stand. lit. amount to) a hundred."

ago. Do not use with *since*, as in "It is nearly twenty years (*ago*) since he was here."

agree, *v.* Used with *to*, *on*, *in*, and *with*. "We *agree* to your proposition." "We *agree* on this price." "We *agree* in theory." "We *agree with* you."

Agreement. Conformity or concord between *pron.* and antecedent in number, between subject and *v.* in points they have in common, i.e., number and person; or between *pron.* and antecedent in number, person, and gender if indicated [or between *this*, *that*, and a *sing. n.* and *these*, *those*, and a *pl. n.*]. For example, a collective *n.* or compound subject considered as a whole takes a *sing. v.* "The grand jury is *sitting*." "Soul and mind *is* all." But if such a subject is considered as combined units it takes a *pl. verb*. "The jury *are* disagreed." "Soul and mind *are* in conflict."

None may take either *sing.* or *pl. v.*, but the other indefinite pronouns, *each*, *neither*, *everyone*, etc., as a rule take a *sing. v.*, and if they are antecedents, are followed by *sing.* pronouns. "Neither of these women has kept *her* appointment."

For concord of *v.* forms in subordinate clauses, see **Conformity of Tenses**.

aim to, *v. Am. stand. lit.*, intend to. *Br.* usage prefers *aim at* in the figurative sense.

ain't, *v. Abbr.* of *am not* or *are not*, wrongly used for *is not*, *has not*, and *have not*; often *sp. a'n't* or *hain't*. In the first person *sing. ain't* is low colloq. "I suppose I'm the last one, *ain't* I?" In other persons it is careless or *vulgar*. "*Ain't* that terrible!" "*Ain't* you goin'?" Do not use *aren't I?* as a substitute for *ain't I?*

airlift, *n.* Systematic air transport, especially that which supplied Berlin during the blockade in 1948; air ferry over hostile territory.

aisle, *n.* Passage between seats of a thea-

ter or assembly room; side division of a church, set off by a row of pillars.

alcoholic, *n.* Person whose excessive drinking has become a disease.

alert, *adj.* On watch, awake. *v.* Rouse as by alarm of military attack, put on the alert.

Alexandrine, *n.* Verse consisting of six iambic feet; ninth line of a Spenserian stanza.

alfalfa, *n.* Lucern, sturdy forage plant of the pea family.

alfresco, *adj.* Open-air.

Algonquian, *adj.* Belonging to any of a group of Indian languages which includes the tongues of the Blackfeet, Chipewas, Crees, and Ottawas as well as the Algonquins.

alibi, *n.* *Tech.* (law), the plea of having been, at the alleged time of the commission of an offense, elsewhere than at the alleged place of commission. *Colloq.*, an excuse, a plausible excuse.

allegory, **parable**, **fable**, **fabliau**. The *allegory* is a story in which persons and things are symbols and the action itself is symbolic, as in *Pilgrim's Progress*. The *allegory*, the *parable*, and the *fable* teach moral lessons by presenting abstract ideas in the guise of concrete images. In the *fable*, talking animals, or even plants, are substituted for persons. The term *parable* is confined to religious subjects. In general, more attention is given to the manner of presentation in the *allegory*, which is also usually much longer than the *parable* or *fable*. All three are related to the metaphor. A *fabliau* (*pl. fabliaux*) is a witty realistic narrative told for its own sake, e.g., Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*.

alley, *n.* Narrow passage; narrow street; *fig.*, "down his *alley*," suited to his natural ability.

alligator pear, *n.* Avocado. This is apparently an instance of the change of a foreign name by folk etymology, illiterate Americans having mumbled "avocado" until they thought they were saying *alligator*.

all in all. This favorite way of introducing a conclusion or a generalization is be-

coming trite. "*All in all*, it was a good show."

Alliteration, **Assonance**. *Alliteration*, the recurrence of the same sound, whether consonant or vowel, initially. Used principally in poetry. Oliver Herford's "Tugged till the toadstool toppled in two." *Assonance*, the similarity of the accented vowels (and those that follow if there be any) in words at the ends of verses or elsewhere, the consonants being unlike, as in *fâte* and *tâke*, *lâdy* and *bâby*.

all of a thing. Logically, since *of* as a partitive denotes part of something that has been divided, e.g., "She is the prettiest of the blondes," *all of* before something that has not been divided would be incorrect. Yet this is not so. The construction with nouns is extremely common. The following expressions are correct: "*All of* the nations of the world"; "*all of* them"; "*all of* these tribes"; "*all of* the books."

allot, **allotted**, **allotting**, *v.* Distribute by lot; distribute.

allow, *v.* When used for *think*, *be of opinion*, *declare*, *assert*, it is *low colloq.* or *dial.* "She's a big one, I'll *allow*." The *stand. lit.* *allow* is less formal and positive than *permit*. "Sometimes they *allow* smoking in this room." As a *v.i.* it is used with *for*. "Are you *allowing* for the baggage?"

all right. To be written so, not *alright*, *allright*, or *all-right*. *Colloq.* in the sense of *gratifying*, *satisfactory*, *correct*, *satisfactorily*, and as an expression of assent. "This plan is *all right*." "*All right*, I'll go." Much better than its slang equivalent, *O.K.* *Low colloq.* or *slang* when used as an *adv.* to mean certainly, undoubtedly. "She's gone, *all right*." "The car knocked him down, *all right*."

all the farther, faster, quicker. *Low colloq.* for *as far as*, *as fast as*, *as quickly as*. "This is *all the farther* I can go."

allude, **refer**, *v.* *Allude* means to indicate by indirection or suggestion; *refer*, to introduce or mention a particular definite person or thing. "He *alluded* to a recent business transaction; he *referred* to his commission of 12 per cent."

allusion, **illusion**, *n.* An *allusion* is an

indirect reference or a hint; an *illusion*, a perception that does not correspond to reality. "She made an *allusion* to a silly habit of mine." "This is an optical *illusion*."

Allusion, Irrelevant. In using a saying or quoting a phrase, make sure that you do not distort its real meaning and that this meaning is appropriate, with no part of it pointless or ambiguous in the context in which you place it. The devil-and-the-sea allusion does not belong in the following passage, for here the alternatives are pleasant ones and not the horns of a dilemma. Besides, one is usually *caught*, not *torn*, between the devil and the sea. "The book dealer who is also a collector is often *torn between the devil and the deep blue sea*—the thrill of making a profit on a rare book, and the inner satisfaction of keeping the volume for himself."

Make sure also that your phrase has not been used too often, like *dim religious light*, *poor as Job's turkey* (he had to lean on a fence to gobble), *feast of reason and flow of soul*. An unadorned plain statement is much better than such clichés.

ally (ă lī'), *v.* Unite with or to; connect. *n.* Confederate, associate; one of the nations in alliance against the Central Powers in World War I. The *pl.* is often pronounced ăl'is.

almost, *adv.* Condensed to *most* (*q.v.*) in careless speech.

aloud, *adv.* In full speaking voice, out loud.

already, all ready. *Already* is an *adv.* meaning *previously* or *before a specified time*. "Already the geese are flying south."

also, *adv.* In addition, moreover. When used as a co-ordinating *conj.* it is *colloq.* unless accompanied with *and* or *as*. "She asks you to accept this present, *also* (*stand. lit. and also*) begs you not to forget your promise to return." Sometimes *but* appears alone as the second member of the correlative pair *not only . . . but (also)*, but never *also*.

altar, *n.* Table or other raised structure on which sacrifices are offered to a god.

alter (awl'tr), *v.* Change; remodel. *Altar*

and *alter* are pronounced the same.

alternate (awl'ter nāt, ăl'ter nāt), **alternative** (awl tur'nā tiv, ăl tur'nā tiv), *adj.* *Alternate* means occurring by turns, every other (one); *alternative*, mutually exclusive (usually said of two things). "He came on *alternate* days." "French and English I are not *alternative* courses; both may be taken the same year." The *n. alternative* means a choice between two (or more) of the things so offered. "The *alternatives* are delay or war."

Alternate, n., means a substitute. "The *alternate* took the appointment because the original appointee refused it."

altogether, *adv.* Utterly, in all respects. Do not confuse with *all together*, which means all at once, simultaneously.

altruistic, *adj.* Devoted to or devised or conceived for the good of others.

aluminum, *n.* Metallic element no. 13, symbol Al. The *Br. sp.* is *aluminium* (ăl ū mīn'ē um).

alumnus, *n. Am.*, college graduate, man with a degree from a certain college. The *pl.* is *alumni*; the female graduate of an American college is an *alumna*; two or more female graduates are *alumnae*. In *colloq.* use, all former students who will pay dues to the association are *alumni*.

alveolar (ăl vē'ō lă), *adj. Tech.*, pertaining to vocal tones produced while the tongue is pressed against a ridge behind the upper front teeth.

amateur (ăm'ă tūr, ăm'ă tūr), *n.* An athlete, sportsman, artist, collector; not a professional. *Amateur* is often confused with *novice*, a beginner.

amateurish, *adj.* Unprofessional, with connotations of futility and immaturity. Contrast "the old college try" which connotes the do-or-die type of Am. sportsmanship without the snobbery of the *Br.* "old school tie."

ambiguous, *adj.* Of uncertain meaning. An expression that seems to mean two things, when the author of it meant only one, is *ambiguous*. E.g.: "And a young man who wears a flower in his hair gives away quarters and whistles in Carnegie Hall."

amenity, *n.* Appropriate or agreeable

behavior, often used in the *pl.*, "the amenities of social intercourse."

Americanism. An *Americanism* is a word or phrase that differs in form or meaning from the expression that would commonly be used in England to mean the same thing. It may or may not have originated in the United States, but it is the American way of expressing a certain idea. The hood of an automobile, an *Americanism*, is called the *bonnet* in England. Thus *bonnet* is a **Britishism**, *q.v.*

Americanize, *v.* Transform to conform to customs or manners in the United States.

americium, *n.* Recently discovered element, radioactive and unstable, No. 95, symbol Am.

ammo, *n.* *Sl.*, ammunition.

among, **between**, *prep.* *Among* is used in referring to several persons or things. "She went *among* the Gypsies." *Between* may be used in referring to two, or more than two, persons or things. "She swept *between* the pews." *Between* always implies separation, its primary meaning being *in the time or space that keeps things apart*, whereas, on the contrary, *among* carries an implication of sharing.

Amongst is the poetic form of *among*.

amorphous, *adj.* Shapeless, vague, disorganized.

amount, **number**. Use the first in referring to the total bulk or mass, the latter in referring to individuals or units. "A small *amount* of gasoline; a large *number* of cars."

ample, *adj.* "They have an *ample supply* of water" is better than "They have *ample water*" because in the sense of *plenty of*, *ample* is preferably used only with nouns denoting abstractions or immaterial things.

an, *a*. *An* is used before words beginning with a vowel sound. Everyone writes *a* before any *h* that is pronounced, but a few follow the old custom of writing *an* before *h* beginning an unaccented syllable, as *an her ba'rium*, *an ho tel'*, *an his to'rian*, *an hy poth'esis*. Still fewer use *an* before a word beginning with a *û* sound: *a(n) European*.

Anachronism. The misplacing of something historically, especially the introduction of a modern invention before its time, as a radio announcement of the fall of Troy.

Analogy. Similarity; a comparison. Reasoning by *analogy* is reasoning from parallel cases. Such reasoning appeals to the imagination but by itself is inconclusive and even misleading because it is nearly always based on an oversimplification or a false or superficial parallelism. Can you say that because a man can make a long journey more quickly if he does not take too fast a pace, an automobile on a long trip should be driven only at a moderate speed? If you cannot, the *analogy* is false.

analysis, *n.* Taking to pieces; classification; partition; reduction of a complex object to its components. This critical catchword is often misused by pseudoscientific writers.

anapest, *n.* Dactyl reversed; metrical foot consisting of two short or unaccented syllables followed by one long or stressed syllable. In scansion, the anapest is represented by $\text{v} - \text{v} -$ or $\text{x} \text{ x} \text{ x}'$.

anaphora, *n.* Repetition of a word at the beginnings of successive clauses.

and etc. If you must write the *and* before *etc.*, write *and so forth*.

and/or, *conj.* Used in business and legal documents. Of questionable value. The jocular use: "Today the President will have occasion to make another historical *and/or* political speech at Vincennes, Indiana."

and, *to*. With a *v.* after *go*, *come*, *send*, *try*, etc., *and* can be used, although the more fastidious insist upon the infinitive with *to*. Generally, *come and see* is stronger than *come to see*; *go and get it* than *go to get it*. But if you wish to express nothing but purpose, use *to*.

anecdote, *n.* Condensed narrative; account of a short incident usually to illustrate a point or describe an odd trait of character or a whimsical turn of events. Do not confuse with *antidote*, a remedy to counteract poison.

anent. A poeticism meaning *about*, *con-*

cerning, in respect to. Write "Concerning (not *anent*) butter prices quoted, we can say . . ."

anesthetic, *n.* Drug producing insensitiveness to pain. [Gr., adapted from an earlier *tech.* medical term, *anesthesia*, by Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes.]

angel, *n.* Messenger of God; heavenly being.

angle, *n.* Place where two lines meet, space between two lines that are about to meet; point of view; side. *Angle* is now *stand. lit.* in the sense of *point of view*, *standpoint*, *aspect*, or *phase*, although not entirely free from the taint of having been journalese. One may say, "He is approaching the problem from another *angle*," but it would be more logical to say, "He is approaching the problem at another *angle*." The *colloq. slant* is similar, meaning point of view, attitude, or opinion that is personal or particular, as "Considered from his *slant*, it does seem different." In the slang of racketeers, *angles* are unfair advantages arising from sharp practices.

Anglicized Word. A word that came from a foreign language and is now modified in some way, as in pronunciation, to conform to native English word habits. The foreign word that becomes so useful as to be a familiar part of the common vocabulary usually is made to conform more quickly than the word used by a few persons only. The Anglicized pronunciation of *esplanade* is *ēsplanad'*, and is preferred to *ēsplanād'*, which is nearer the Spanish.

announcer, *n.* *Radio tech.*, maker of introductions, explanations, or advertising announcements in connection with radio programs.

antagonist, *n.* Adversary; opponent of the protagonist in a tragedy.

antagonize, *v.* Alienate, incur the enmity of.

ante, *n.* Stake in the pool in a poker game [*L.*, before].

Antecedent. In grammar, the *n.* which precedes a *pron.*, and to which the *pron.* is said to refer. In "This was the man who had flown around the world," *man* is the antecedent of *who*. See **REFERENCE**.

antenna, *n.* Wire used in sending or receiving electromagnetic waves. In this sense the *pl.* is *antennas*.

anti, *adj.* and *n.* Against; in opposition; chronic opponent.

anticipate, expect, *v.* *Anticipate* means to foresee, get a foretaste of, forestall, introduce too soon. The general meaning of *expect* is to look forward to something likely or confidently counted on to happen. "A full list of prizes has been secured and Mr. Lister *expects* (not *anticipates*) a big crowd."

anticlimax, *n.* See **CLIMAX**.

antidote, *n.* See **ANECDOTE**.

Antithesis. Balanced contrast. Pope's heroic couplets are built upon antitheses. "In words as fashions the same rule will hold,

Alike fantastic if too new or old;

Be not the first by whom the new is tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

Antonym. Word of opposite meaning; *heavy* is the *antonym* of *light*. Cf. *synonym*, which means a word of approximately the same meaning.

anxious, *adj.* Although often objected to when used in the sense of *eager*, or *calculated to cause worry*, it may be so used. "Gertrude is *anxious* to meet the new boy." "You will find out that it is a very *anxious* business."

any, *adv.* To any extent, in any degree, at all. "Did he work *any* this week?" "That didn't help them *any*." "I can't stay any longer." The *adj.* means *an indefinite single one* (indifferently) of *an indefinite number, quantity, or degree; some*. After a negative it means *appreciable*. "We hadn't been gone for *any* length of time." As a *pron.* it generally takes the place of *some* in questions and negative or conditional statements. Cf. "Give him *some*," and "Don't give him *any*." "Some of my uncle's money, if he had *any*, should come to me." "Did *any* of the passengers survive?"

anybody else's. Present-day usage prefers to give the possessive ending to the *else* rather than to *anybody*. Write *anybody else's*, *anyone else's*, etc.

anyplace, every place, someplace, adv. *Colloq.* for *anywhere, everywhere, and somewhere*. "I will go *anyplace* (*stand. lit. anywhere*) you say." "Is there *any place* where I can write?" is *stand. lit.*

anyway, anyhow, adv. Practically synonymous. *Anyways* means *anywise*, at all, in any case, anyhow. *Anyways* means *anywise*, but for *anyhow* or *in any case* or *at any rate* it is *dial.* or *vulgar*, as in "*Anyways*, Fanny told me you hid it."

anywheres, adv. The final *s* of *anywheres, everywhere, and somewhere* is *dial.*

Anzac, n. Australian and New Zealand Army Corps; member of that military force. [acronym]

Anzus, n. Australia, New Zealand, United States, associated in a system of collective security. See *acronym*.

Apache (à pā'chā or à pā'chī), *n.* American Indian tribesman of a roving South-western group; as occasionally applied to Parisian gangsters the name is printed without capitalization and is commonly pronounced à pāsh'.

aphorism, n. Pithy sentence; maxim; concise wise saying.

aplenty. *Stand. lit.* as an *adj.*, as in "He had cloth *aplenty*," but slang as an *adv.*, as in "He was worried *aplenty*."

apocope (a pōk'o pē), *n.* Omission of the last syllable of a word; clipping. [Gr.]

Apostrophe. Punctuation mark (') used for the following purposes:

1. To indicate the omission of one or more letters from a word, or one or more figures from a date. *I'll, 'tis, ne'er, Ass'n, Class of '40*. It is not needed before *twenties, thirties*, etc., denoting the decades of a century, although the *nineteen*, etc., has been omitted. "That style was popular in the *twenties*."
2. To form the plurals of letters, figures, signs, and words used as words only. "She chose the *8's*, the *9's*, and the *13's*." "Watch your *n's*, your final *g's*, and your *don't's*."
3. Followed by an *s*, to form the possessive of *sing.* and *pl. n.* not ending in

an *s* or *z* sound. The *apostrophe* with *s* is used with one-syllable *sing.* nouns ending in an *s* or *z* sound, and with polysyllabic *sing.* nouns having this ending and a primary or secondary accent on the final syllable. The *apostrophe* with *s* is often less ambiguous than the *apostrophe* alone (*Alberts'* and *Albert's* sound alike) and is preferred in most modern proper names of more than one syllable, even when the accent falls on the next-to-last syllable. "The hunter's horse"; "the children's games"; "Louise's program"; "Lewis's novels"; "Dickens's influence"; "Wells's ideas."

4. Without an *s*, to form the possessive of *pl.* nouns ending in an *s* or *z* sound, except a few forming their *pl.* by internal vowel change. "The hunters' horses"; "the commuters' tickets"; "the Browns' Cafeteria"; "the mice's nests"; "the geese's feathers."
5. Without an *s*, to form the possessive of some (especially the two-syllable) classical or foreign proper names and certain common nouns ending in an *s* or *z* sound. Nouns coming before *sake*, and others like *actress, innocence, heiress*, etc., usually drop the *s* (and sometimes may drop the *apostrophe*) especially in poetry or when the next word begins with a hissing sound. *Zeus's, Brutus', Atlas', Cervantes', "For goodness' (or goodness) sake . . ."*
6. With an *s*, to form the *group possessive*. The *apostrophe* and *s* are added to the final member of a group of two or more when the reference is to joint ownership. Similarly, they are added to the last *n.* to form the possessive of two or more nouns in apposition or in the same construction. "Joan and Jennie's table finished first." But "Both Joan's and Jennie's letters were sent." "The member from Ohio's motion was adopted."

Follow local usage in the matter of place names and titles. The *apostrophe* is often

omitted. "The Teachers Club"; "Clarices Inn."

No apostrophe is used with the pronouns *his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs*.

Apostrophe. A turning away. The rhetorical device (mainly poetical and oratorical) of breaking off the discourse to address some deity, person(s), or personified thing, present or (more usually) absent.

Arethusa. Do what, sir? Would sleep?

Philaster. For ever, Arethusa. Oh, you Gods,

Give me a worthy patience!

Have I stood

Naked, alone, the shock of many fortunes?

—BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER,

Philaster, III, 2

appearance, n. Semblance; external show; apparition. Careless spellers should note the spelling.

appendix, pl. appendixes, appendices, n. Something added or appended; outgrowth; supplement.

appointee, n. Officer designated by another officer or by a small group; official not elected.

apposite, opposite, adj. *Apposite* means relevant, fitting (often used with *to*); *opposite*, contrary, set over against. "The man who sat *opposite* made the *apposite* remark that it was nobody's business."

Appositive. A *n.* or *n.* equivalent set beside another (usually without connective) as an explanatory or restricting adjunct or as an attributive. In "I see that Rex Pipes, the *plumber*, has honored us with another visitation—the *fifth* this month," *plumber* and *fifth* are in apposition to *Pipes* and *visitation*.

The *adj.* in the *appositive* position—"The morning, *dull* and *listless* . . ."—is less connected with its *n.* than if it were *adherent*, i.e., "The *dull* and *listless* morning . . ."

appraise, v. t. Set a value on; estimate the worth of.

appreciate, v. Set a just value upon; approve; be thankful for; increase in value (opposite of *depreciate*); cause to rise in value.

apprehend, comprehend, v. *Apprehend* means to seize; *comprehend*, to understand fully.

apprise or apprise, v. Notify, inform, with *of*. Cf. *advise*.

appropriate, v. Am., set apart or assign for a certain use; *Br.,* steal, take for oneself, except when the purpose is specified.

apropos (ăp'rō pō), adv. Opportunely, suitably, with respect to, by the way. May be used with *to*, but *of* is generally preferred. "*Apropos*, it is worth your while to notice his casual remarks" illustrates the absolute use. *Adj.* "A remark very *apropos*; that is, to the point."

apt, adj. *Stand lit.,* fit, suitable; *Am.,* likely.

apt, likely, liable. *Apt* emphasizes the idea of predisposition. "A sentimental person is *apt* to cry." *Likely* emphasizes that of probability. "It is *likely* to rain." But these words are often interchanged, especially *colloq.* One may say *colloq.* "It is *apt* (or *liable*) to rain," but the *stand. lit.* *liable* implies lack of defense against something, as in "Children are *liable* to get measles."

aquiline, adj. Hooked like an eagle beak.

Archaism. Antiquated word or expression: *whilom, I trow yon, perchance*. Most archaisms are poeticisms (*q.v.*), and some are used only in special phrases; e.g., *yore* in *of yore*. An obsolete word is one no longer in use; *archaisms* are obsolescent.

archiepiscopal (ăr'kī ē pīs'kō pāl), adj. Like an archbishop.

area, n. Part, division; journalistic *adj.,* local; regional.

aren't I? A bad substitute for the *colloq. ain't I? Aren't* is a contraction of *are not* as in "*Aren't* they there yet?"

argot (ăr'gō, ār'göt), n. Secret language of thieves and vagabonds. Sometimes used to mean the special language of a trade, or of a professional or social group; i.e., *trade* or *tech.* language.

Argument. The presentation of one side of a controversial subject. See **Fallacy, Analogy** and **Blurred Thinking; Persuasion**.

arise, rise, v. The first is more poetical and dignified.

around, *adv.* and *prep.* On all sides; *colloq.*, about, approximately; *Am. st. lit.*, at the other side of.

around, round. *Around*, *adv.*, is correctly used in the senses of *all about*, *here and there*, *somewhere near*, in *every direction*, *to the rearward*. "Fred looked around." "They were standing around." *Round* is sometimes incorrectly used for *around*, as in "There was not enough chicken to go round" (better *around*). As a *prep.* *around* is *colloq.* in the sense of *about*, as in "Around 900 men will be needed," and "He arrived around nine o'clock."

The *Am. colloq. adj.* *all-around*, possessing general ability, excellence, usefulness, is the *Br. all-round*. "The best all-around American athletes will compete."

In general, *around* directs attention inward toward a center, and *round* outward to the circumference or to motion along it. "The trees danced round and round."

Arrangement. Have you arranged your ideas in the most effective order? The perfectly arranged composition meets the requirements of the four essentials: time, interest, facility, and expediency. See CLIMAX.

arsis, *pl. arses*, *n.* Accented syllable of a metrical foot. [*Gr.*, rising.]

artery, *n.* Tubular vessel carrying blood from the heart; important or central road or thoroughfare.

articulate, *v.* Connect, link; connect sounds in clear and fluent speech.

articulation, *n.* Connection in smooth sequence; expression of orderly thought in appropriate phrasing.

as, *relative pron.* After *the same*, *such*, *so*, and *as*, it may introduce a relative clause. "She will never be *the same as* she was before." "He is just *such a man as* they have been looking for." But *as* for *who* or *that*, as in "Though I say it *as* shouldn't," or "I don't know *as* he is here," is *dial.* or *low. colloq.*

as, *conj.* *As if* is better than *as though* in sentences like "It looks *as if* it were going to snow." *As is* is *trade* or *tech.* (business) for without guarantee. "I will sell it *as is* for twenty dollars."

as, *adv.* **as . . . as**, **so . . . as**, *correlatives*. The *as . . . as* used always in affirmative constructions—"He ran *as well as* could be expected"—is correct also in negative ones, "He doesn't write *as well now as* formerly." However, many writers prefer *so . . . as* in negative constructions: "Your task is not *so difficult as* his."

as how. *Provincial* or *dial.*, whether; *old colloq.*, that.

ascent (ăs sĕnt'), *n.* Rise, upward climb. Cf. *ascent*.

ashcan, *n.* Equivalent to *Br. dustbin*.

aside, *adv.* Apart; *n.* actor's speech which, by convention, is not overheard by other players on the stage.

aside from, *prep. phrase. Colloq.* for *apart from*, in *addition to*, and *except for*. "*Aside from* (stand. lit. *except for*) a black eye, he showed no sign of having been in a fight."

ask (New England, ăsk; General American ăsk), *v.* Do not pronounce *ăst* or *ăst*. *Past*, *dance*, *half*, *can't* and similar words are pronounced with the *ă* in New England and *ă* in the rest of the country, except the South where the *ă* is likely to be somewhat broader.

as long as, *conj.* A causal *as well as* a temporal *conj.* Temporal: "*As long as* the sailing was easy, she was willing to help with the cooking." Causal: "*As long as* (since, inasmuch as) he is already there, he may remain in the hospital for treatment over the week end."

aspect, *n.* Countenance; appearance, view; *grammatical tech.*, variation in form of a verb to represent (1) a general truth or (2) action in progress. The present indicative form is commonly used to show the first or "terminal" aspect, as in the wise saying, "Cows ruminat^e." A present participle combined with a form of the verb *to be* shows the progressive aspect. "The cow *is*, was, has been chewing."

aspirant (ăs pĭrănt), *n.* One who desires eagerly. "The presidential aspirant was pleased when *Pravda* called him a war-monger."

aspirin, *n.* Acetylsalicylic acid, an efficient pain-killer; *colloq.*, five-grain tablet

of this drug. [*a* from acetyl, *spir* from spiraeic, the alternate name for salicylic acid, + suffix *-in*.]

assent, *n.* Agreement; affirmative response; *v.* agree; express concurrence.

Assonance. Repetition of the same vowel sound in several stressed syllables in a line or successive lines of verse. See ALITERATION.

assurance, *n.* State of being assured; confidence; insurance.

as . . . than. Do not try to make a double comparison, such as "Jenkins is as tall if not taller *than* Perkins." If *as* introduces an *adj.* in a comparison, use another *as* to complete the construction, "Jenkins is as tall as Perkins, if not taller" or "Jenkins is as tall as, if not taller *than*, Perkins."

as to The lazy man's *prep.* of all work. Nearly always another *prep.* would be more accurate and expressive. *As to* before *whether*, *how*, *when*, *where*, and so on makes a very awkward construction. Write "I do not know *whether* (not *as to whether*) she is here yet." "He didn't say a thing *as to* (better *about*) money." However, *as to* is useful at the beginning of a sentence when something is to be specified: "*As to* the truth of this report, we know nothing."

astronomical, *adj.* In accord with principles or customs of astronomy; *colloq.*, mathematically vast, like the numerical symbols used by astronomers.

astrophysics, *n.* Physical science of the heavenly bodies.

as well as, *conj.* Does not take the objective case unless an objective precedes it.

at, *prep.* Redundant in the *low colloq.* use with *where*, as in "Where'll she be at ten o'clock tomorrow?" "Where's she at now?" "Business wants to know where it is at."

atabrine, *n.* Synthetic drug useful in treatment of malaria.

athlete, *n.* Participant in physical exercise or contests. Note that this word is a dissyllable.

Atmosphere. In painting or description, the mood of the scene expressed in terms of human emotion.

atom, *n.* Small particle; smallest possible particle. [*Gr.*, indivisible.]

at that. *Colloq.* for *even so*, *without further ado*, *anyway*, *moreover*, *nevertheless*. "Perhaps Mr. Robinson's intelligent discussion of their shortcomings is having its effect, *at that*." "Finally she made a scene, and in a public place *at that*."

attributive, *adj.* Having the quality of an adjective standing with its noun to denote assumed qualification; not predicative.

audience, *n.* Group of hearers; formal interview granted by an important personage.

audio, *adj.* Concerned with direct hearing. The audio wave conveys direct transmission of a radio program from a studio. It contrasts with the carrier wave of a broadcasting station.

audition, *n.* Hearing; *v.* give a hearing to, consider for a job as a vocal entertainer.

auditorium, *n.* Large hall in which meetings are held.

aureomycin, *n.* Antibiotic differing from penicillin in that it has a specific effect on viruses.

author, *v.* *Colloq.* write, compose. "President Truman authored a new declaration of foreign policy."

autochthonous, *adj.* Native, aboriginal, sprung from the ground. This is one of Walt Whitman's pet words.

auxiliary, *adj.* Assisting, assistant, conferring help.

averse. See ADVERSE.

avocado, *n.* Pulpy fruit of *Persea persea*, usually sliced for salad.

avocation, *n.* Secondary pursuit, field of minor activity; major hobby.

avocation, *vocation*. "His *vocation* is advertising, his *avocation* gardening."

away, *adv.* In the meaning of *far distant in time or space* it is written *colloq.* 'way. "'Way down south in Dixie, 'way down on the third floor, 'way back in 1889." *Colloq.* in the sense of *unhesitatingly*, *without delay*. "Haul away, fiddle away."

a ways, *adv.* *Colloq.* and *dial.* for *a way*. "She walked a long *ways* before we caught up with her."