

# *A Handbook of English Usage*

John Tennant



Longmans

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## Preface

This is a book of explanations—explanations of the difficulties in English usage that a dictionary may not always solve. Several years of teaching and examining candidates for the Cambridge examinations in English as a Foreign Language have shown me that many of them make very much the same mistakes, whatever their mother tongue. Accordingly, the articles given here are based on errors I have frequently encountered in the English that they write.

This book is not, however, intended to give comprehensive rules of grammar, but to serve rather as a supplementary reference book to the various courses and dictionaries that may be used in classes. Some notes on English social customs and their vocabulary are added in the hope that these may prove useful on the student's first visit to England.

The English vocabulary has many words derived from Latin that are used suitably in formal or official contexts but that are unnatural to everyday speech, and to English hearers seem to express a self-satisfaction which is considered in bad taste. For instance, to speak of 'my residence' instead of 'my house' would generally be considered pompous. Unfortunately such words often resemble in form the everyday word in some European languages and so the student is misled by their seeming similarity. It is even more troublesome when identical words have different meanings. The articles on pairs of words endeavour to clarify their use, and by means of examples from everyday speech to show their suitability in various circumstances.

I would like to thank my publishers and their advisers for the many useful suggestions they have made, my wife for her encouragement and practical assistance in the preparation of this book, and the very many students of the English language who have unwittingly provided its subject matter.

Cambridge

JOHN TENNANT

## How to use this Book

When you have learnt English for two or three years, you will probably be able to read it fairly easily, and to write in English or translate into it well enough to make yourself understood, but you may still need further help in handling the language correctly and idiomatically.

The chief use of this book is as a work of reference. The articles are arranged alphabetically, and there is also an Index (page 179) of individual words which have no separate entry, but which are mentioned in more general articles.

It is probable that the book will serve you best if you first read through all the articles, perhaps only a few pages at a time, and mark anything you find you were not quite sure about. By reading through the whole book you will see what difficulties are dealt with, and where to find them.

Examples of correct English usage are printed in italics preceded by a colon (:) but examples of incorrect English are printed in ordinary type and always enclosed within quotation marks, often with the word NOT to warn you that this is wrong. You can see this on page 11:

**avoid** is followed by the gerund, NOT by the infinitive: *You should avoid being late for your class.* (NOT 'You should avoid to be late.')

The pronunciation, indicated by phonetic symbols, has been given only where it has been found to cause difficulty.

# Pronunciation

The phonetic symbols used in this book are those used by Professor Daniel Jones in his *English Pronouncing Dictionary*.

## VOWELS

i:	see	seat
i	dim	sit
e	ten	best
æ	sand	cat
ɑ:	father	cart
ɔ:	long	got
ɔ:	saw	caught
u	good	foot
u:	true	root
ʌ	gun	cut
ə:	fur	first
ə	about	over

## DIPHTHONGS

ei	day	rate
ou	go	goat
ai	my	right
au	now	doubt
ɔi	boy	quoit
ie	fear	
ɛə	hair	
ɔə	shore	
uə	tour	

The sign (˘) over a vowel shows that the sound (in a word borrowed from another language) is nasal, i.e. sounded through the nose.

## CONSONANTS

θ	thin	ʃ	ship	ŋ	long	tʃ	church
ð	then	ʒ	measure	j	you	dʒ	judge
g	always as in <i>get</i>			s	always as in <i>so</i>		
z	always as <i>z</i> in <i>maze</i> or <i>s</i> in <i>rose</i> .						

All other consonants have their usual English pronunciation.

## WORD STRESS

In a word of more than one syllable the most strongly stressed syllable has the sign (ˈ) before it. A long word may also have a minor stress, shown by (ˌ), on another syllable:

desert (noun): ˈdezət; desert (verb): diˈzə:t  
inclination: ˌinkliˈneiʃn

## Abbreviations used in this Book

adj	adjective	prep.	preposition
adv	adverb	pres. part.	present participle
e.g.	for example ( <i>exempli gratia</i> )	plu.	plural
i.e.	that is ( <i>id est</i> )	sing.	singular
past part.	past participle	vb.	verb
pers.	person	=	has the meaning of

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## A

**a, an.** The indefinite article is *a* before consonant sounds and *an* before vowel sounds, as in *an army, an egg, an intelligent person, an ugly face*.

The following points should be noted:

1. Use *a* (NOT 'an') before words beginning with a vowel with a consonantal sound: *a useful gadget, a university, a euphemism, a European, such a one*.

2. Use *an* (NOT 'a') before words where the *h* is NOT sounded, such as *heir, honest, honour, hour*, etc. See H, SILENT.

Some people do not sound the initial *h* in certain adjs where the stress occurs on the second syllable. Thus they say *an habitual drunkard, an harmonious sound, an heroic act, an historical novel*. It is, however, more general to sound the *h* in these words.

*Hotel* has become anglicized and most people say *a hotel* (with a sounded *h*). Those who know French, however, tend to say *an hotel*.

3. The indefinite article is NOT used before uncountables such as *advice, clothing, fun, furniture, information, jewellery, luggage, music, news, poetry, scenery*. Before such words, *some* or a phrase like *a piece of* may be used, as in, *a piece of advice, an article of clothing, some luggage, an item of news*. See UNCOUNTABLE.

**a.m.** — see TIME.

**a.s.o.** presumably is used as an abbreviation for *and so on* but it is NOT ENGLISH and NEVER used by English people. See ETC.

**abandoned** — notice spelling, NOT 'nned'.

**academy** is used for a college where training is given for some special purpose, such as the *Royal Academy of Music, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art* (both in London), the *Royal Military Academy*, etc.

The *Royal Academy* or simply the *Academy* refers to the society of artists which holds an annual exhibition in London of new works of art.

*Academy* was used of a superior type of private school but in England this is falling out of use. It is, however, the everyday word in Scotland for what in England is called a grammar-school.

**accommodation** — notice spelling: double *c*, double *m*.

*Accommodation* generally means a place to stay (rooms, flat or house): *Are you looking for furnished accommodation? I could find no suitable accommodation near my work*.

It is, however, better to say *rooms* than *accommodation*: *Have you any furnished rooms to let?*

*Accommodation* is NOT used in the plural in English, but *-s* is added in U.S.A.

**according to, accordingly.** *According to* = on the authority of: *According to some writers, Shakespeare was the son of a butcher*. It also = with regard to, or, in proportion to: *Prices of suits vary according to the quality of the cloth*.

*Accordingly* = for this reason, when used in such a sentence as, *He had been told to visit his aunt when in London and he accordingly*

*presented himself at No. 10 Belgrave Square on the following day.*  
**accustom** (vb). Generally used in the passive = to have grown used to: *I am accustomed to having dinner at eight o'clock. We became accustomed to his peculiar accent.*  
 See USED TO.

**acquaintance** — notice spelling: second letter is c.

You refer to people as *acquaintances* when you know them slightly but not well enough to call them friends: *I do not feel I can ask Mrs Jones to help me because, after all, she is only an acquaintance.*

As an abstract noun, *acquaintance* = knowledge of a person or subject: *I have some acquaintance with the history of London. He proved, on further acquaintance (i.e. when I got to know him better) to be a most interesting person.*

**actual, actually.** These words stress the reality of anything, its real existence as opposed to what is imagined: *I thought there were over a hundred people at the meeting but the actual attendance was 92.*

*Actually* is often used to suggest surprise or incredulity: *Did you actually speak to the Queen?* (This implies that I am surprised at what you say and can hardly believe it.)

Neither word = at the present time: *Last year I lived in London but now (or at this moment, or at the present time, but NOT 'actually') I have a house in the country.*

**address** — notice spelling: double d.

When *address* = a talk given before an audience, see **SPEECH**.

**adjectives** of material, in -en. Many nouns of material made the adj with suffix -en. Only two are now in common use, *wooden* and

*woollen*. A few are current English, such as *earthen, flaxen, hempen, olden, wheaten*, but are not often used. Many others are used only in a figurative sense, such as *ashen face, brazen behaviour, golden opinions, leaden feet, waxen skin*.

For participles in -en used as adjs, such as *drunken, stricken*, see **PARTICIPLES** in -EN.

**administer** is the form of the verb used in English (NOT 'administrate', which is American usage). The past tense is *administered*. The noun is *administration*, and the adj is *administrative*. An *administrator* is a person who performs legal or official duties.

**admission, admittance.** The first word is the general word meaning a right to enter a place or join a society, the second is rather of physical ability to enter a place. *No admittance* on a door or gate indicates you are not allowed to go through it. *Admission* — *one shilling*, means you have the right to enter when you have paid your money.

**adverse** to (NOT 'from'), **averse** to (or from). The first = opposed to; the second = having a dislike of.

**advertisement.** A public announcement in journals, by posters or on the radio, usually of goods for sale. (It does NOT = a warning). The abbreviation *advert.* should NOT be used in formal English.

**advise, advise** — notice the difference in spelling and pronunciation. *Advice*, æd'vaiz, is the noun, *advise*, æd'vaiz, is the verb.

See also **DEVICE**, **LICENCE** and **PRACTICE**.

*Advice* is uncountable (i.e. is NOT used with 'an', nor in the plural): *Thank you for such good advice. I want to ask your advice about which book to buy, or, Will*



*you please advise me which book to buy?*

An *advice* or an *advice note* is a commercial term used for a formal notice of transactions.

**aerodrome, airport, airfield.** *Aerodrome* is the general word, but *airport* has recently come into use for civil aerodromes with regular passenger services. *Airfield* is used more of military aerodromes but the form 'aeropot' is NOT used.

**aeroplane, airplane, aircraft.** *Aeroplane, plane, and aircraft* are the usual words. *Airplane* is the American form but becoming popular in English. *Aircraft* (used for both singular and plural) is perhaps used more by the R.A.F., civil air-lines and the *aircraft* industry.

**aesthetic** is the usual form of the adjective (NOT 'aesthetical').

**affaire.** The French spelling *affaire* generally refers to a casual or illicit love affair, often with a married person: *I was disgusted when I heard he was having an affaire with his secretary.*

**affect, effect** are often confused, even by English people.

*Affect* (always a verb) = to have an influence or an effect on a person or thing: *Whatever you say will not affect my decision.*

*Effect* (usually the noun derived from affect) = the result, as in *the effect of the heat, the effect of the war.*

*Effect* (verb) = to bring about or accomplish: *This change was effected very quickly.*

**affected, as adj.** is applied to people who assume a quality or an appearance not natural to them in an attempt to seem superior: *She was a snob, and spoke in an affected voice so that people would think she belonged to some noble*

*family.* Such behaviour is called *affectation*. Do not confuse this with *affection*, which is a very friendly or loving feeling towards anyone.

**afford, allow.** *Afford* in everyday English = to have enough money to buy something or enough time to do something. It is generally used with *can, could, be able to* or their negatives: *I can't afford a new dress. Jim said he was sorry, he couldn't afford the time; he was too busy.*

*Afford* is used in more formal English with the words *chance* or *opportunity* to give the sense of *allow*: *Tomorrow's meeting will afford us the opportunity of discussing some important questions.*

It should not, however, be used by itself to mean *allow*: *The visit to London allowed* (NOT 'afforded') *him to settle his business with the lawyers.*

**after all.** This phrase is used with more than a purely temporal sense. It suggests completion of a task in spite of difficulties, or when all circumstances have been considered: *She has done well to pass the Lower Certificate because, after all, she knew very little English when she came.*

**ago** is used after a word meaning a period of time: *a week ago, some years ago.* When a clause follows the period of time, *ago* is replaced by *since*: *It is ten years since I saw my brother, or, I saw my brother ten years ago* (but NOT 'It is ten years ago since I saw him.').

**agreement, agreeable, agreeably** — notice spelling: double *e*. Also in *disagreement, etc.*

**agriculture** — notice spelling: NOT 'colt'.

**aim, as noun,** often = purpose or intention: *My aim in going to*

*England is to improve my knowledge of the language.*

It may be used as a verb: *I shall aim at gaining my Certificate of Proficiency next June.* See GOAL.

**alien** (noun) is the official term for an overseas visitor from a country not in the British Commonwealth. It is used by the police and Home Office, but in everyday language the word in common use is *foreigner*.

**alienist**, meaning a doctor specializing in mental diseases, is NOT in general use.

**alike** — see LIKE.

**all right** should be written as two separate words. It is a familiar method of agreeing to a suggestion: *Will you meet me at ten o'clock? All right.* (i.e. Yes, I will.)

**all that** is correct in sentences such as: *I have told you all that I know.* *All that you said is no doubt true.*

The word *that* is the relative pronoun beginning the clauses *that I know* and *that you said*.

You must NOT use 'all what I know' or 'all what you said'.

*All that* is used colloquially with adjs in sentences such as, *He was not all that rich*, or, *He was not as rich as all that* (i.e. He was not as rich as you had been led to believe). See WHAT.

**alley**. This word is generally restricted to a narrow passage used by pedestrians only, such as is found in old towns, often in poor districts or slums. It is NOT used of a wide road in a town or park.

A *blind alley* is one from which there is no exit because it is closed at one end. A street similarly closed is generally signposted NO

THROUGH ROAD. The expression *cul de sac* (from French) is often used with this meaning. A *blind alley job* refers to an occupation with no chance of promotion or improved salary.

*Skiittle alleys*, where the game of skittles is played, are still found in some public-houses.

**allowed, aloud**. Distinguish between *allowed* = permitted, and *aloud* = uttering sounds that can be heard: *We are never allowed to read aloud in school because a loud noise would disturb the students.*

**allure** is used mainly as a verb, meaning to tempt, fascinate or charm someone. The usual noun is *allurement*, but *allure* is nowadays used as the noun, especially in advertisements.

The French word *allure* should NOT be rendered by the same word, but by *walk*, *bearing* or *speed*, according to the context.

**almost** is NOT used with a negative such as *no* or *never*. Instead of 'almost no' we use *scarcely any* or *hardly any*: *There were scarcely any people at the concert* (NOT 'almost no people'). *They hardly ever go to the pictures* (NOT 'almost never').

**Alps** — notice spelling: NOT 'Alpes'.

To most English people the word *Alps* refers only to the mountain ranges of Switzerland and neighbouring countries. It is NOT used of mountains generally. 'An alp' is NOT used in the singular for a mountain.

**already**. When referring to past events, this adverb is used with a compound tense rather than the simple past: *When I came in, she was already laying the table. I have already signed the document. I had already bought a map, so we quickly planned our route.*

**American Usage.** The American language has much in common with English but there are certain differences in vocabulary that may puzzle the foreign student of English, as, indeed, they puzzle English people themselves.

With the ever-increasing impact of American on English through films, radio and television, we in England are adopting more and more words, or new uses of words, that have crossed the Atlantic.

For instance, *truck* is now often used for *lorry*, and the American word *commuters* (people who travel daily from the suburbs to work in the city) is being accepted as a useful addition to the English vocabulary.

At the moment, the following words seem to be keeping their separate meanings on each side of the Atlantic.

## AMERICAN USAGE

## ENGLISH EQUIVALENT

administrate	administer
the Administration	the Government
alumnus	graduate
apartment	flat
automobile	motor-car or car
baby-carriage	perambulator or pram
baggage	luggage
bar	'pub' or public-house
biscuit	scone or bread-roll
Britisher	Briton
bug	insect or beetle
call you	phone or ring you
can (of fruit, etc.)	tin
candy	sweets
car (on railway)	carriage
checkers	draughts (the game)
closet	cupboard
conductor (of a train)	guard
cookies	sweet biscuits
corn	maize
cracker	cheese biscuit
crystal	watch-glass
daylight-saving time	'summer time'
deck of cards	pack of cards
derby	bowler hat
drug-store	chemist's shop (but no real equivalent of this American institution)
elevator	lift
engineer (of a train)	engine driver
fall	autumn
faucet	water-tap
football game	football match
freight-cars (on railways)	goods wagons
garbage	household rubbish
garbage-pail	dustbin

## AMERICAN USAGE

## ENGLISH EQUIVALENT

gas, gasoline	petrol
grip	travelling bag
guard (in a prison)	warder
homely (applied to a person, especially a girl)	plain, not good-looking
instalment buying	hire-purchase
janitor	door-keeper or caretaker
kerosene	paraffin
long-distance (telephone call)	trunk call
lumber	timber
mail	post (letters)
movies	pictures
phone-booth or pay-station	public call-box (telephone)
period	full stop
pitcher	jug
purse	lady's hand-bag
railroad	railway
realtor	estate-agent
rent	hire (except for property, where rent is used)
rooming-house	boarding house
run (in a stocking)	ladder
sedan	saloon car
sick	ill
sidewalk	pavement or foot-path
skillet	frying pan
Secretary of State	Foreign Secretary
State Department	Foreign Office
suspenders	braces
thumb-tacks	drawing pins
truck	lorry
veteran	ex-Service man (one who has served in the Armed Forces)
warden	prison-governor

**amid, among.** Both words = in the middle of, surrounded by, but *among* is generally used only with separable objects (countables) in the plural: *Among my friends are several Spaniards.* See also BETWEEN.

*Amid* is literary English, not in everyday use.

*Amidst* and *amongst* are alternative forms now dropping out of

use but *in the midst of* is current literary English.

**amuse** generally = to cause someone to laugh: *The clown at the circus amused the children,* or, *The children at the circus were amused at the antics of the clown.*

*amuse oneself* (or myself, ourselves, etc.) = to spend the time agreeably: *Can you amuse yourself while I write some letters? I*

*can amuse myself for hours just watching the people go by.*

If there is a more active feeling of pleasure, it is better to use *to enjoy*, or, more colloquially, *to have a good time*: *We enjoyed ourselves at the dance. Enjoy yourself at the party*, or, *Have a good time at the party*. (NOT 'amuse yourself at the party'.)

**analphabet** is NOT an English word.

A person who cannot read is described as *illiterate*.

**and with adjectives.** Before a noun, two or more adjectives are not usually joined by *and*: *Many poor people* (NOT 'many and poor') *gathered at the church*.

After a noun, two adjectives are joined by *and*; three or more take *and* between the last two: *Mary was tall and fair. Joan was rich, beautiful and proud*.

**Anglican** = connected with the Church of England and should NOT be used as a synonym for *English*.

**anniversary.** On formal occasions we may speak of the *anniversary* of your birthday, but *birthday*, *birthday party*, are more common in everyday speech.

*Anniversary* is seldom used alone, unless the context is clear, but is generally qualified, as in *wedding anniversary*, *anniversary of his appointment as manager*. See BIRTHDAY.

**another** is written as one word when it means an additional one or a different one: *Have another glass of wine. Didn't you like that cake? Try another*.

**antics, antiques.** Do not confuse these nouns. *Antics* = curious, grotesque actions or behaviour. *Antiques* = pieces of furniture, jewellery or pottery which are valuable because they are old.

**apostrophe.** Full explanations of its use are given in most text-books, but special care is needed in the following words and phrases:

1. Contracted forms of verbs should be used only in informal writing (such as personal letters) or in recording conversation. Notice the spelling in *don't*, *aren't*, *can't* (= cannot), *shan't* (= shall not), *won't* (= will not), *he's*, *she's* (= he, she, is, has), *it's* (= it is, has), *who's* (= who is or who has).
2. Plural words NOT ending in *-s*, make the possessive by adding *'s* and not *s'*, as in *men's coats*, *women's hats*, *children's toys*, *two deer's horns*, *two sheep's tails*.
3. Personal names ending in *-s* in the singular usually make the possessive by adding *'s*, as in *King Charles's reign*, *St James's Park*, *Mr Jones's house*.

It is also correct, however, to add the apostrophe only, as in *Keats' poems*, *Dickens' novels*. This is found in more formal writing and also with the longer classical names or those containing several sounds of *s*, when it is thought to sound better, as in *Sophocles' tragedies*, *Aristophanes' comedies*, *Ulysses' wife*.

Be careful NOT to put the apostrophe *before* the final *-s* of these names. 'Dickens's novels' would mean those written by *Dicken*, not *Dickens*.

4. With names of royalty in the possessive the apostrophe is added to the figure or the word, as in *Henry VIII's wives* or *Henry the Eighth's wives*.
5. Where a personal name is used as an adj, the apostrophe is NOT used: *He bought a Queen*

*Anne table* (i.e. a table made in the characteristic style of Queen Anne's reign). *We are reading a Shakespeare play.*

6. For the possessive of names of countries, islands and towns ending in -s we do not use the apostrophe, but say *the products of the United States, Rhodes, Athens, Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, etc.*

Notice that many English people sound the final -s of *Paris* and add a sounded -s to *Lyons* and *Marseilles*. Here again we would use *of* and not the apostrophe, as in *the bridges of Paris*.

7. The apostrophe is used in certain expressions measuring time and distance, as in *an hour's time, a two hours' delay, a stone's throw away*.
8. It is also used in such expressions as *for goodness' sake, out of harm's way, at his wit's end, in his mind's eye*.
9. The apostrophe is NEVER used in the words *hers, ours, yours, theirs, its* (the possessive adj), *whose*. Nor is it used in *oneself*.

**appearance, apparition.** *Appearance* = the action of coming into sight; *apparition* is used only for the sight of a supernatural being or ghost, but not of living creatures.

**appreciate** — notice spelling. The usual meaning is to be grateful for something a person has done for you: *I appreciate all the help you have given me today.*

**appreciative, appreciable.** *Appreciative* = showing gratitude: *He was very appreciative of my help.*

*Appreciable* = able to be estimated or noticed: *There was an appreciable drop in the temperature and ice began to form on the lake.*

**apt** = suitable or appropriate, as in *an apt reply, an apt quotation.*

*Apt to* = inclined to, likely to: *My memory is not very good and I am very apt to forget people's names.*

**Arabia, Arab, Arabic.** *Arabia* is a place name, a geographical term with the corresponding adj *Arabian*, as in *the Arabian desert*.

*Arab* is the noun or adj referring to the race of people living in the lands south and east of the Mediterranean: *Many of the Arabs support Arab nationalism.*

*Arabic* is the noun or adj referring to the language or literature: *Can you speak Arabic? We use Arabic numerals.*

**archaic**, a:'keik = out of date, no longer used. In several articles of this book certain words are said to be *archaic*, such as *brethren, betrothed, eve, dwell*, etc. These should not, of course, be used in current English, especially in speech. The following words, which may be met with in historical novels, should also be avoided in everyday language. Their modern equivalents are given.

betimes	—	early
betwixt	—	between
burgess	—	citizen
deem	—	think
doughty	—	brave
demesne	—	estate
forsooth	—	truly
hither	—	here
nigh	—	near
perchance	—	perhaps
quoth	—	said
swoon	—	faint
tarry	—	linger
thence	—	from there
thither	—	to that place
verily	—	truly

whence — from where  
to wit — namely  
wont — custom  
Yule — Christmas

**arise, arouse.** These two verbs are often confused. *Arise* is the intransitive form (past tenses, *arose, have arisen*). In the sense of getting up from a bed or chair it is now formal and literary, but it is in current use in such other expressions as: *An awkward situation will possibly arise next week at the Foreign Ministers' Conference. The trouble first arose in East Africa.*

*Arouse* (past tense, *aroused*) is transitive and means to stir up: *This announcement will arouse a feeling of anger among freedom-loving people.*

*Rouse* = wake up a person: *He was so soundly asleep that even shaking did not rouse him. See RAISE.*

**arrive at** (NOT 'arrive to'. Notice the correct preposition.) *We arrived at the station. He arrived at the conclusion that he had been mistaken.*

With names of countries and large cities we use *in*: *I arrived in England a week ago. We arrived in London last week.*

**art, arts.** *Art* in everyday language = drawing and painting: *I don't like modern art. She is an art student.* It is also used for a human skill or ability to do something very well, as in *the art of the novelist.*

*Arts* or *Arts subjects* at a university or school are those of philosophy, literature, languages and history.

**arts and crafts.** The *arts*, as in *He is a lover of the arts*, includes literature, drama, painting, sculpture, music; i.e. creative work in which

the imagination plays a great part. In *crafts* it is technical ability in shaping materials that is more important, as in weaving, pottery, needlework, or carpentry.

**artist, artiste.** *Artist* usually means a painter, sculptor, etc., but we often use it to imply great skill in some particular accomplishment: *He is not merely a good cook, he is an artist.*

*Artiste* (French spelling) is used for a professional performer, man or woman, in the theatre, circus or concert-hall, or on the radio. It is, however, now being replaced by the English spelling, *artist*, used with this meaning.

**artistic, artful, artless, arty.** *Artistic* (NOT 'artistical') is the adj used for a person, object, performance, etc., with qualities revealing good taste or skill in one of the arts: *You have only to see her house to know she is very artistic.*

*Artful* is crafty, cunning, clever in a sly way: *The artful boy managed to hide the stolen apples when the policeman passed. Artful* does NOT mean full of art and beauty, for which *artistic* may often be used.

*Artless* = ingenuous, unsophisticated (i.e. without art in the sense of skill and cunning): *The little girl asked in her artless way if I believed in fairies.*

*Arty* is colloquial, suggesting an attempt at being artistic but failing through lack of good taste.

**as, like.** *As* is a conjunction, *like* is a preposition: *Do as I tell you. Do it like this. Try to describe the scene as Dickens does. No one has written anything quite like Lamb's Essays of Elia.*

**as, such as.** *Such as* (NOT 'as') must be used when giving examples: *The needs of man, such as food,*

*clothing and shelter, can now be met. Human qualities, such as bravery and kindness, are to be valued. Great cities, such as London, Paris or New York, are exciting places.*

**ascent, ascension.** Both words refer to the action of ascending. *Ascent* is the everyday word applied to the climbing of mountains, the upward movement of aircraft, etc.

*Ascension* is now restricted to the religious context of the *Ascension of Jesus Christ*, but is in more general use in U.S.A.

**asleep, sleeping, sleepy.** *Asleep* is used as adv and adj coming after the verb: *He soon fell asleep. He was asleep in a few moments. I made sure he was asleep before I opened the door.* It denotes the state of sleep.

*Sleeping* is pres. part., gerund or adj, and used before the noun, as in *the sleeping child* or, figuratively, *the sleeping city*. *He was sleeping peacefully* and *He was peacefully asleep* mean the same thing. We can say *the man asleep under the trees* (NOT 'the asleep man').

*Sleepy* is drowsy, ready to go to sleep: *The child was so sleepy, his head was nodding as he sat in the chair.* It can be used, figuratively, of a very quiet place, as in *a sleepy country town*.

**assist.** In English this verb = to help. It does NOT = to be present. See ATTEND.

**assistance, assistants.** *Assistance* is the abstract noun meaning help, aid.

*Assistants* are helpers in a general sense (NOT those who are present at some function — see AUDIENCE). *Shop assistants* is the usual word for men and women who serve in shops.

*Assistant* often means a subsidiary official, one who is next in rank below, as in the *Assistant Medical Officer*.

**at last, at least.** *At last* is used when some long-awaited action has taken place after a period of doubt and uncertainty: *'At last you've come,' he cried. 'I was afraid you had been taken ill.'* *She struggled against the strong current and at last reached the rock.*

*At least* suggests the minimum of what is required; it would be impossible to accept anything smaller: *We must have, at least three bedrooms. You should read at least two chapters every day.*

**atmosphere** — notice spelling: NOT 'ath-'.  
**attend, attend to.** *Attend* = to be present at a meeting, lecture, etc.: *You must attend the class next week.* It is a formal word and is generally used with the sense of going to a place where you ought to go. You *attend* school, a church service, a court of law, but you *go to* a dance, the cinema, a concert, etc.

We do NOT say 'attend to' school but *attend* school. *Attend to* = to give your mind to, to look after, to deal with: *Attend to what I am saying*, or, *Pay attention to what I am saying. I will attend to all the arrangements for the journey.* See also FOLLOW and FREQUENT.

**attendance, attendants.** *Attendance* is a body of people present at a meeting: *There was a good attendance at the evening session of the conference.*

*Attendants* are helpers, servants, staff on duty at theatres, museums, etc., to control the movement of the public.

**attired** = dressed (NOT 'attracted by'), but is now old-fashioned and



used only in a very formal and dignified connection: *The Queen, attired in magnificent robes, ascended the throne.*

**attorney** — see **LAWYER**.

**audience** is the collective noun for people listening to a play, film, lecture or musical performance. At church services, the people present are called the *congregation* (NOT 'audience'). See **AUDITION**.

There is a special use of *audience* to mean a formal interview with a head of state or other important person, but this is used only in official language which retains an old usage no longer found in everyday English: *The French Ambassador was received in audience by the Queen. Important visitors are granted an audience of the Pope.*

**audition, auditors.** These two words are often confused with *audience*.

*Audition* = a trial performance of an actor or singer to show his or her abilities when applying for employment: *After an audition, he was offered a part in the play.*

*Auditors* is generally used only in the technical sense of accountants who examine and certify as correct the financial records of a business or some organization.

**auditorium** is the part of the building where the audience sits. In England it is used mainly of theatres and cinemas, but in the U.S.A. of any hall used for meetings or concerts.

**avenge, revenge.** *Avenge* (verb) is used when you punish someone for the wrong done to somebody else. The corresponding noun is *vengeance*: *At last he had avenged his brother's murder.* Or *He had exacted vengeance for his brother's murder.*

*Revenge oneself* (verb) is used when the wrong has been done to you. The corresponding noun is *revenge*.

*To have your revenge or to take your revenge* is used more than the verb *revenge oneself*: We may say *I revenged myself for the insult*, but it is more usual to say *I had my revenge for the insult. I will have my revenge next time* (often said by the loser at a game).

*Revenge* is, therefore, more concerned with personal satisfaction in making someone suffer for a wrong (often not very serious) done to you. *Avenge* is concerned with justice for someone else.

*With a vengeance* is an idiomatic expression meaning to a high degree, to the greatest extent: *He said he would write a long essay and he has done so with a vengeance; there are over fifty pages!*

**avoid** is followed by the gerund, NOT the infinitive: *You should avoid being late for your class.* (NOT 'You should avoid to be late'.) *Try to avoid making such silly mistakes.* (NOT 'Try to avoid to make . . .'.) See **GERUND**.