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Chambers Essential English Dictionary

钱伯斯基础英语词典

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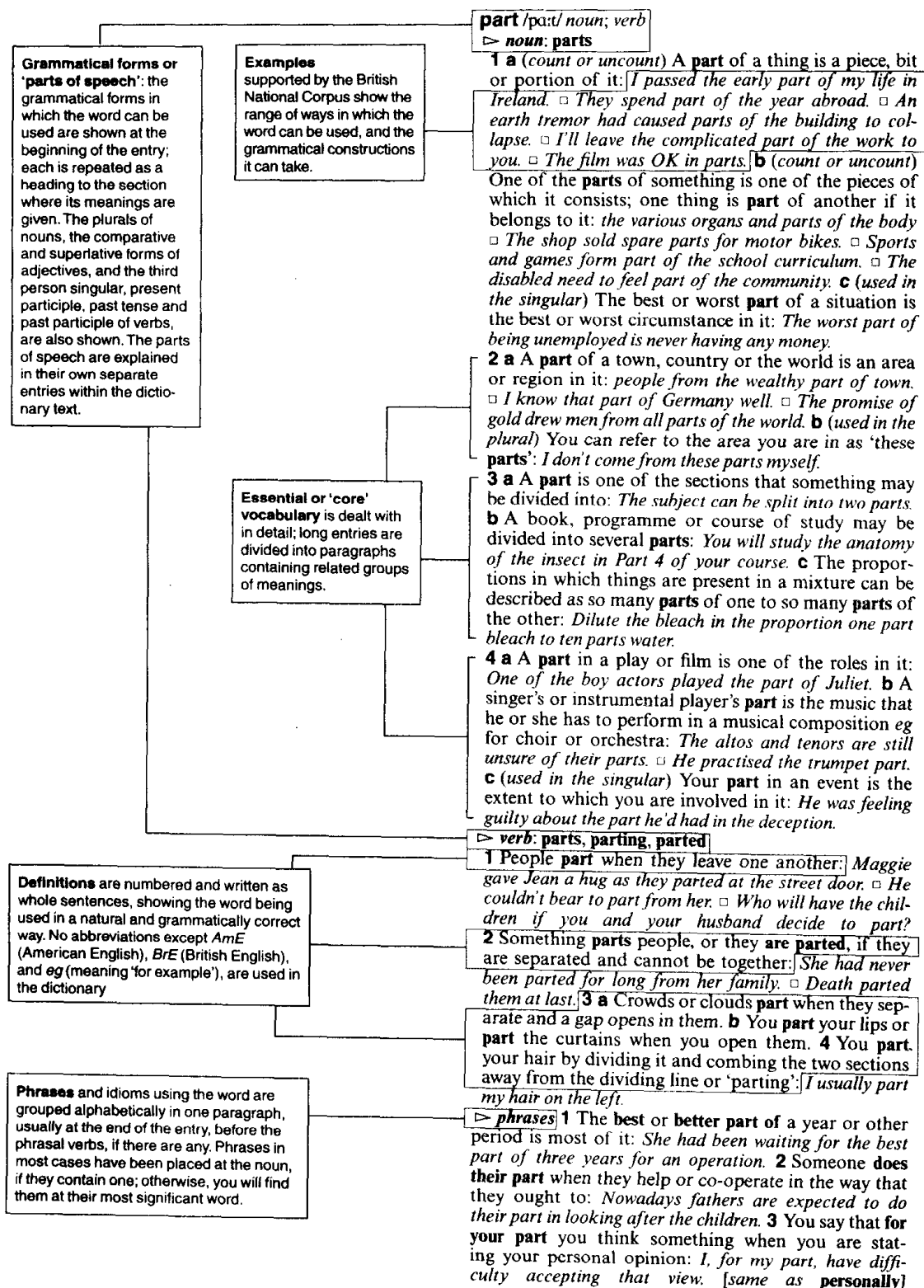
Preface

Chambers Essential English Dictionary is a new dictionary for intermediate and advanced learners that focuses on those words that are most frequently used in everyday speech and writing. It is these often highly idiomatic words that learners find most difficult to use correctly, and yet they are the very words that are essential to successful communication. It has been our aim in this dictionary to give the most complete information about these essential or 'core' words. We have drawn throughout on the authoritative British National Corpus for evidence of how words are used, and for examples of real English. The exceptionally clear layout enables users to find the information they need quickly and easily. Full-sentence definitions show the word in the right grammatical context; sense and usage are readily understood, and the learner is immediately able to use the word correctly. In short, this dictionary gives information about everyday English that no learner should be without.

Every dictionary is the work of a dedicated team of people, and the editors would like to thank everyone involved, especially Kay Cullen and Howard Sargeant for their unfailing energy and commitment to the project, Ilona Morison for keeping the computer systems running, John-Paul Young for help with the appendices, and Stephanie Pickering for help with proof-reading. We would also like to thank Penny Hands, whose work in the final stages of the project has been invaluable.

Elaine Higgleton
Anne Seaton
May 1995

Organization of entries



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A

A or a /eɪ/: As or a's

1 A is the first letter of the English alphabet. **2** The letter A is used as a mark for grading quality, indicating the highest grade: *She got As in all her exams.* **3** A is a musical note: *in the key of A minor.*

▷ **phrases** **1** You get **from A to B** when you find your way from one place to another. **2 From A to Z** means from the beginning to the end: *She went through the whole explanation again from A to Z.*

a /eɪ/ or /ə/ or **an** /an/ or /ən/ **determiner** (indefinite article)

You use **a** before words beginning with a consonant or consonant sound: *a hotel; a yacht; a unit; a European.*

You use **an** before words beginning with a vowel or vowel sound: *an adult; an honour; an hourly rate; an MP.* The pronunciations /eɪ/ (for a) and /ən/ (for an) are used for emphasis: *I haven't seen your pen, but here's a pen for you. I've thought of an answer, even if it's not the right one.*

You use **a** and **an** before nouns or noun groups:

1 to refer to actual people or things without saying which you mean: *I'm going to a concert tonight.* □ *She's having lunch with an old friend.*

2 to refer to classes of people or things, meaning no particular one: *A concert is a musical performance.* □ *Why not discuss it with a friend?* □ *She's an expert in computer graphics.* □ *He wants to be a psychiatrist.* □ *She was a kind person.*

You use **a** and **an** mostly with singular count nouns: *Can you recommend a good electrician? Do make an effort to understand.*

You can omit **a** or **an** before the second and following count nouns in a pair or list: *He handed me a knife and fork. She packed a swimsuit, swimming hat and towel.*

With plural nouns and uncount nouns you show indefinite meaning by using no article: *He's crazy about trains. Coping with illness takes courage and patience. Will you have tea or coffee?*

But you can treat an uncount noun like a count noun, using **a** or **an**, (i) when you are referring to a type, kind or class: *She chose a red wine to drink with the meal. Brie is a soft cheese.*

(ii) when you mean a serving of something, eg in a cup or glass: *She ordered me a coffee.*

(iii) when you are referring to an example or occurrence of a particular quality: *She had a natural love of language.*

3 to mean 'one' in expressing number or quantity: *a year* □ *a week* □ *a hundred pounds* □ *a thousand francs* □ *a million dollars* □ *a dozen (12) eggs.*

One is used instead of **a** or **an** for emphasis or contrast: *She wrote all five books in one year. How many copies shall we print? One thousand or two?*

4 in certain other expressions of quantity: *a few books* □ *a lot of paper* □ *a little milk.*

5 to turn a proper name into a count noun: *There's a Mr Green [= someone called Mr Green] on the telephone for you.* □ *You'll never be a Marilyn Monroe.* [= a woman like Marilyn Monroe]

6 in expressing frequency, rate or cost: *I clean the house once a week.* □ *They get paid \$6.50 an hour.* □ *Petrol is 54p a litre here.* [see also **per**]

7 with count nouns formed from verbs, meaning an act of doing something: *Let me have a think.* □ *Have a try.*

aback /ə'bak/ **adverb**

▷ **phrase** You are **taken aback** when you are surprised, usually unpleasantly: *She blinked, taken aback by his accusation.*

abacus /'abəkəs/ **noun**: **abacuses**

An **abacus** is a frame fitted with bars, each one with a certain number of beads on it, which is used for counting and calculation.

abandon /ə'bandən/ **verb**; **noun**

▷ **verb**: **abandons, abandoning, abandoned**

1 To **abandon** someone or something that you are responsible for is to leave them for a long time or for ever: *We have seen a few cases of unmarried mothers abandoning their newborn babies.* □ *My car broke down and I had to abandon it on the main road.* **2** You **abandon** an activity or an attempt to do something when you stop it: *They abandoned the search at midnight and resumed in the morning.* □ *He abandoned all pretence at politeness.* [same as **give up**] **3** You **abandon** yourself to sorrow or a similar feeling when you let yourself be overcome by it: *She refused to abandon herself to despair.* — **adjective** **abandoned**: *After the snowstorm the roads were full of abandoned vehicles.* — **noun** (uncount) **abandonment**: *The abandonment of the project will mean a lot of unemployment.*

▷ **noun** (uncount)

People do something with **abandon** when they do it with enthusiasm or with apparent lack of embarrassment or caution: *I saw you at the party, dancing with abandon.*

abase /ə'beɪs/ **verb**: **abases, abasing, abased**

You **abase** yourself when you abandon your pride and behave in a humble manner, eg when you are forced to beg for something or apologize. [same as **humble**]

abashed /ə'baʃt/ **adjective**

You are **abashed** when you feel embarrassed or shy: *Both men looked slightly abashed, like a pair of guilty schoolboys.*

abate /ə'beɪt/ **verb**: **abates, abating, abated**

Something such as a storm or someone's anger **abates** when it becomes less fierce and calms down. [same as **let up, subside**]

abattoir /'abətwa:(r)/ **noun**: **abattoirs**

An **abattoir** is a place where animals, eg cattle or pigs, are killed to provide food. [same as **slaughterhouse**]

abbess /'abes/ **noun**: **abbesses**

An **abbess** is the female principal of an abbey or convent.

abbey /'æbi/ *noun*: **abbeys**

An **abbey** is a church that has or once had a group of buildings attached to it for a religious community of monks or nuns to live in.

abbot /'æbət/ *noun*: **abbots**

An **abbot** is the male principal of an abbey or monastery.

abbreviate /ə'brɪvi'eɪt/ *verb*: **abbreviates, abbreviating, abbreviated**

A word or phrase is **abbreviated** when it is shortened by omitting some letters or using only first letters: *Katharine didn't like her name being abbreviated to Kate.*

abbreviation /əbrɪ'vi'eɪʃən/ *noun*: **abbreviations**

An **abbreviation** of a word or phrase is a short form of it, either with some letters omitted, or with each word represented by its first letter: *The abbreviation VDU stands for 'visual-display unit'.*

ABC *noun*: **ABCs**

1 (used in the singular) Children learn their **ABC** when they learn the alphabet. 2 The **ABC** of a subject is the basic facts or skills you need to learn, or a book explaining them.

abdicate /'æbdɪkeɪt/ *verb*: **abdicates, abdicating, abdicated**

1 You **abdicate** your responsibility for something if you refuse to go on being responsible for it. 2 A king or queen **abdicates** when they resign from the throne. — *noun* (uncount) **abdication** /æbdɪ'keɪʃən/: the abdication of Edward VIII.

abdomen /'æbdəmən/ *noun*: **abdomens**

Your **abdomen** is the front part of your body between your waist and thighs, containing organs such as your liver, kidneys, stomach and bowels. — *adjective* **abdominal** /æb'dɒmɪnəl/: *She was taken to hospital with severe abdominal pain.*

abduct /æb'dʌkt/ *verb*: **abducts, abducting, abducted**

Someone **abducts** another person when they take them away by force: *She was abducted on her way home from school.* [see also **kidnap**] — *noun* (uncount or count) **abduction** /æb'dʌkʃən/: the abduction of her husband.

aberration /əbə'reɪʃən/ *noun*: **aberrations**

An **aberration** is a departure from what is normal, eg an unusual or untypical piece of behaviour.

abeyance /ə'beɪəns/ *noun* (uncount)

➤ *phrase* A law, rule or arrangement is in **abeyance** if it has been cancelled temporarily or is no longer in use.

abhor /æb'hɔ:(r)/ *verb*: **abhors, abhorring, abhorred**

You **abhor** something if you hate it or disapprove of it strongly. [same as **detest**, **loathe**]

abhorrence /æb'hɔ:rəns/ *noun* (uncount)

Abhorrence is strong disapproval or disgust: *Ordinary citizens have demonstrated again and again their abhorrence of terrorism.* [same as **repugnance**]

abhorrent /æb'hɔ:rənt/ *adjective*

Something is **abhorrent** to you if you strongly disapprove of it or are disgusted or shocked by it. [same as **repugnant**]

abide /ə'baɪd/ *verb*: **abides, abiding, abided**

You say you cannot **abide** someone or something if you dislike them strongly. [same as **bear**, **stand**]

phrasal verb

You **abide by** a rule, law or decision if you obey it or act according to it: *These are the terms of her will, and we must abide by them.* [same as **adhere to**]

abiding /ə'baɪdɪŋ/ *adjective*

An **abiding** joy, love, dislike or fear lasts for a long time: *A childhood accident had left him with an abiding fear of water.* [same as **lasting**]

ability /ə'bɪlɪti/ *noun* (uncount or count): **abilities**

Someone's **ability** to do something is their state of being able to do it, or the skill they possess to do it: *I used to doubt my ability to cope with a crisis like this.*

□ *He's now lost the ability to walk.* □ *You're certainly a person of unusual abilities.* □ *She has this extraordinary ability to foresee difficulties.* □ *She showed remarkable ability as an organizer.* □ *a scholar of great linguistic ability.* [compare **capacity**, **power**, **talent**, **skill**, **competence**, **capability**]

➤ *phrase* You do something to the best of your **abilities** or **ability** when you do it as well as you can.

-ability /ə'bɪlɪti/ *suffix*

Nouns formed from adjectives ending with the suffix **-able** have the suffix **-ability**. [see also **-ibility**]

object /'æbdʒekt/ *adjective*

1 Someone who is in an **object** condition is in so desperate a state of misery or poverty that they have no pride left. [same as **wretched**] 2 **Object** behaviour shows a shameful lack of courage and pride: *an object coward* □ *object obedience.* — *adverb* **objectly**: *He apologized objectly.*

ablaze /ə'bleɪz/ *adjective*

1 Something that is **ablaze** is on fire or burning strongly: *Within seconds the room was ablaze.* 2 A place that is full of bright lights or colours is said to be **ablaze** with light or colour. 3 Someone's face or eyes can be **ablaze** with a passion such as anger or love.

able /'eɪbəl/ *adjective*: **abler, ablest**

1 You are **able** to do something if you have the knowledge, skill, strength, power, time, opportunity or money to do it: *I was able to answer the first three questions.* □ *He was able to walk again within a week.* □ *A monkey is able to hang by its tail.* □ *She was able to retire at the age of 50.* [opposite **unable**]

Be able to is used like **can** and **could**: *I'm still able to (or can still) read without glasses. She was able to (or could) read music by the age of three.*

When you are talking about a single occasion in the past, use **was able** rather than **could**: *She was able to (not could) climb through a window and escape.* [see note at **could**]

Be able to is used where **can** and **could** are not possible: *I'll be able to get to work more quickly when I move house. The ape seemed to be able to reason like a human. I might be able to come on Thursday. He's been able to visit us more often recently. It's lovely being able to see you every day.*

2 An **able** person is sensible, intelligent and efficient, or is good at their particular job: *She's an able leader in every way.* □ *You can rely on him; he's very able.* □ *He's one of the ablest teachers I know.* □ *The abler children are encouraged to help the less able.* [same as **capable**; opposite **incompetent**]

-able /'eɪbəl/ *suffix*

-able is added to verbs to form adjectives meaning 'able to be ...', eg *eat* + **-able** = *eatable*, meaning 'able to be eaten' or 'safe or pleasant to eat'.

able-bodied /'eɪbəl'bɒdɪd/ *adjective*

An **able-bodied** person is someone who is fit, strong and healthy.

ably /'eɪbli/ *adverb*

Someone does something **ably** if they do it well: *The choir was ably conducted by Idris Evans.*

abnormal /æb'nɔ:məl/ *adjective*

An **abnormal** person or thing is different from what is usual, especially in a way that worries you: *Don't worry; your baby isn't abnormal.* □ *an abnormal desire for attention* □ *abnormal behaviour.* [opposite **normal**]

abnormality /abnɔ:'malɪti/ or /abnɔ'malɪti/ *noun*: abnormalities

1 (uncount) **Abnormality** is the state or condition of being abnormal: *The X-rays showed no evidence of abnormality.* 2 An **abnormality** is something abnormal: *a heart abnormality.*

abnormally /əb'nɔ:məli/ *adverb*

1 **Abnormally** means in a strange or unusual manner: *He was acting abnormally.* [opposite **normally**]

2 **Abnormally** also means unusually, or more than usually: *She's abnormally thin.*

aboard /ə'bɔ:d/ *preposition; adverb*

▷ **preposition**

You go, or are, **aboard** a ship or plane when you get on it or are on it.

▷ **adverb**: *All 21 aboard are feared drowned.* [same as on board]

abode /ə'bɔud/ *noun* (uncount)

▷ **phrase** (BrE; legal) Someone who is of no fixed **abode** has no regular home or address.

abolish /ə'bɒlɪʃ/ *verb*: abolishes, abolishing, abolished

A law, system, custom or activity is **abolished** when it is ended, cancelled or stopped. — *noun* (uncount) **abolition** /ə'bɒlɪʃən/: the abolition of capital punishment.

abominable /ə'bɒmɪnəbəl/ *adjective*

You call something **abominable** if you think it is very bad, wicked or unpleasant: *the abominable practice of torturing prisoners.* — *adverb* **abominably**: *You behaved abominably this evening.*

Aboriginal /əbɔ'ndʒɪnəl/ *noun*: Aborigines

An **Aboriginal** is a member of the race of people that were already living in Australia when European settlers arrived.

abort /ə'bɔ:t/ *verb*: aborts, aborting, aborted

1 A pregnancy is **aborted** when it is ended deliberately. [same as **terminate**] 2 A plan, project or process is **aborted** when it is stopped before it has been fully developed or carried out, eg because of difficulties or dangers: *The launch of the satellite had to be aborted.* [same as **call off**, **axe**]

abortion /ə'bɔ:ʃən/ *noun* (count or uncount): abortions

An **abortion** is an operation to end an unwanted or dangerous pregnancy: *She decided to have an abortion.*

abortive /ə'bɔ:tv/ *adjective*

An **abortive** scheme or attempt is one that fails: *There was an abortive attempt at a coup during the President's absence.* [same as **failed**]

abound /ə'baʊnd/ *verb*: abounds, abounding, abounded

A place **abounds** with, or in, certain things, or they **abound**, where there are a lot of them: *Stories abound on the subject of his numerous marriages.* □ *woods abounding with wildlife.*

about /ə'baʊt/ *preposition; adverb*

▷ **preposition**

1 You think, talk or write **about** a subject: *Tell me about your holiday.* □ *Did you watch that programme about AIDS?* □ *I've heard all about your work.*

You use **on** instead of **about** in referring to the subject of more serious or scholarly books and articles: *an article on the poet Dante; a novel about Cyprus.*

2 You do something **about** a matter when you deal with it: *I'll see what can be done about it.* 3 Something eg good or bad **about** something or someone is a good or bad point, feature or quality that they have: *The nice thing about moving house is the chance to make new friends.* □ *There's something very strange about her.* 4 People or things are, or move, **about** a place if they are, or move, here and there in it: *I've been walk-*

ing about the town, exploring. □ *Clothes were scattered about the room.* [same as **around**]

▷ **adverb**

1 **About** means 'approximately' when used before a number, measurement or period of time: *I'll stay in Oxford for about a week.* □ *She's about 25.* □ *We live about three miles from here.* 2 Someone or something is **about** when they are nearby or easily available: *Hallo; is there anyone about?* □ *There's plenty of fresh fruit about just now.* 3 You move **about**, or move something **about**, when you go, or move something, in different directions: *The children were running about happily.* □ *Stop waving that knife about.* 4 **About** is used with some verbs to indicate a lack of sensible purpose: *I wish we could do something instead of just fiddling about.* [same as **around**]

▷ **phrases** 1 You are **about to** do something when you are just going to do it, or will be doing it soon: *I was just about to serve dinner.* □ *My son is about to leave school.* 2 (informal) You say you are **not about to** do something when you are determined not to do it: *I wasn't about to take orders from a nobody like him.* 3 You say to someone **how about** something when you are suggesting doing it or having it: *How about going for a walk?* □ *How about a drink?* 4 You say **that's about it** when you have finished doing something, eg telling someone something. 5 You say to someone **what about** something when you are reminding them of it or asking them to consider it: *We've got enough food for today, but what about tomorrow?*

about-turn /ə'baʊt'tɜ:n/ *noun*: about-turns

An **about-turn** or **about-face** is also a complete change, or reversing of policy, eg by a government. [same as **U-turn**]

above /ə'baʊ/ *preposition; adverb; adjective; noun*

▷ **preposition**

1 Something is **above** something else if it is higher than it: *We flew above the clouds most of the way.* □ *The sun shone fiercely above us.* [opposite **below**]

Above and over are both possible where there is a clear vertical relationship: *Can you read the sign above (or over) the door? They live in the flat above (or over) ours.*

2 You use **above** in relation to a standard point on a scale of measurement: *The mountain summit is 2556 metres above sea level.* □ *We've been having above-average temperatures for the time of year.* [opposite **below**]

Over is used more often than above where the comparison is with a specified measurement or amount: *people over (or above) the age of sixty; The tickets cost over £30.*

3 Someone's rank or position is **above** another person's if it is senior to it: *There are so many people above me that I can never hope to reach a senior post myself.* [opposite **below**]

Use **over** where the meaning is 'in charge of' or 'supervising': *We have someone called a 'project manager' over us.*

4 People are said to be **above** some activity if they disapprove of it and refuse to take part in it: *He allowed his wife to gamble, though apparently he was above it himself.*

5 You are **above** something such as suspicion or criticism if you are so well respected that no-one could suspect you or criticize you. [same as **beyond**] 6 Something is **above** you if it is too difficult for you to understand: *I'm afraid all this computer language is above me.*

▷ **adverb**

1 **Above** means higher in position, amount, level or

rank: *The apartment above is empty.* □ *The noise seemed to be coming from above.* □ *James and his bride are pictured above left, leaving for their honeymoon.* □ *temperatures of 80° and above.* □ *She made friends with a student in the year above.* [opposite below] **2** In a written work or paper, reference is sometimes made to a passage **above**, meaning a piece of text before the bit you are reading. [opposite below]

▷ **adjective:** *Read the above statement and make sure it is accurate before signing your name.* □ *Please contact us at the above address.*

▷ **noun:** *If you have read the above and agree with it, sign here.*

▷ **phrases** **1** You use **above all** to emphasize your most important point: *It's too far, too late, and above all, too dangerous.* **2** People say you are getting **above yourself** if they think you are becoming too pleased with yourself, or rather conceited.

above-board /əˈbʌv bɔːd/ adjective

Something such as a deal or arrangement is said to be **above-board** if it has been explained or made known to everyone who has a right to know about it, and accepted as fair and honest. [opposite underhand, shady]

abrasion /əˈbreɪʒən/ noun: abrasions

An **abrasion** is an injury to the skin caused by scraping or rubbing. [same as graze]

abrasive /əˈbreɪsɪv/ adjective

1 An **abrasive** material is any rough material such as sandpaper, that is used for smoothing and polishing surfaces. **2** You call someone, or their manner, **abrasive** if they behave or speak in a way that seems rude, or that hurts people. [same as caustic, brusque]

abreast /əˈbreɪst/ adverb

1 Someone walks **abreast** with another person, or two people walk **abreast**, when they walk one beside the other. [same as side by side] **2** You are, or keep, **abreast** of the news or other subject if you are always checking up on the most recent facts. [same as up to date, in touch]

abridge /əˈbrɪdʒ/ verb: abridges, abridging, abridged

A book is **abridged** when sections of its text are removed to make it shorter. — **noun** (count or uncount) **abridgement** or **abridgment:** *They've been reading an abridgement of her novel on the radio.*

abroad /əˈbrɔːd/ adverb

You go **abroad** when you travel to a foreign country: *Are you going abroad this year?* □ *He'll contact you when he returns from abroad.*

abrupt /əˈbrʌpt/ adjective

1 Something such as a stop or change is **abrupt** if it comes suddenly and unexpectedly: *Our holiday came to an abrupt end when we lost all our money.* **2** Someone is **abrupt** in the way they speak if they sound rude and unfriendly: *You were a bit abrupt with your father just now.* [same as curt] — **adverb** **abruptly:** *He said goodbye abruptly and walked away.*

abscess /ˈæbses/ or /ˈæbsəs/ noun: abscesses

An **abscess** is a painful, infected swelling, eg one in the gum caused by a bad tooth.

abscond /əbˈskɒnd/ verb: absconds, absconding, absconded

1 Someone **absconds** from a place such as a prison when they run away from it. **2** A member of a business firm or other body **absconds** with something such as the firm's money when they steal it and run away with it.

absence /ˈæbsəns/ noun: absences

1 (uncount or count) **Absence** is a period or occasion

of being away: *The new manager had arrived during her absence.* □ *After so long an absence from school he may find the work difficult.* **2** (used in the singular) An **absence** of something is a lack of it: *In the absence of any encouragement or support, he was forced to drop his plan.*

[see also presence]

absent /ˈæbsənt/ adjective

1 Someone or something is **absent** from a place or occasion if they are not there: *She was absent from the meeting.* □ *How many pupils are absent today?* □ *Let's drink to absent friends.* [opposite present] **2** An **absent** expression on someone's face shows that they are not paying attention or concentrating. [same as preoccupied; opposite attentive] — **adverb** **absently:** *She was staring absently out of the window.*

absentee /ˈæbsenˈtiː/ noun: absentees

An **absentee** is someone who is not present where or when they ought to be.

absent-minded /ˈæbsəntˈmaɪndɪd/ adjective

An **absent-minded** person is forgetful and also tends not to notice what is happening around them. — **adverb** **absent-mindedly:** *He absent-mindedly picked up someone else's briefcase.*

absolute /ˈæbsəluːt/ or /ˈæbsəljuːt/ adjective

1 **Absolute** means complete, total or entire: *I'm telling you this in absolute confidence; no-one else must know.* **2** (informal) You call a person or thing an **absolute** something for emphasis: *I've been an absolute idiot.* □ *He's an absolute darling.* □ *It'll be an absolute disaster if I fail my exams.* **3** Someone who has **absolute** power, authority or control eg over a country or organization can decide how it should be run without consulting anyone else: *an absolute ruler* □ *Her power is absolute.* [same as supreme] **4** You discuss a thing in **absolute** terms, when you are thinking of it as independent of any of the things it might be related to or compared with; an **absolute** truth, rule or principle is one that is always right or valid.

absolutely /ˈæbsəˈluːtli/ or /ˈæbsəlˈjuːtli/ adverb

1 **Absolutely** means completely or totally: *I agree with you absolutely.* □ *I'm absolutely convinced.* □ *Funding is absolutely essential if research is to continue.* □ *Was your journey absolutely necessary?* **2** (with a negative) **Absolutely** is used to mean 'at all': *This map is absolutely no help.* **3** (intensifying; informal) **Absolutely** is used for emphasis: *The weather is absolutely awful.* **4** (used as an answer) **Absolutely** means 'I completely agree with you': *'He really ought to take more rest at his age.'* *'Absolutely.'*

absolution /ˈæbsəˈluːʃən/ noun (uncount)

In the Christian Church, **absolution** is the forgiving of a person's sin or wrongdoing by a priest, as God's representative.

absolve /ˈæbzəlv/ verb: absolves, absolving, absolved

Someone is **absolved** from responsibility or blame for something that has gone wrong when it is officially stated that they are not responsible or guilty. [same as clear, exonerate]

absorb /əbˈzɔːb/ verb: absorbs, absorbing, absorbed

1 Something **absorbs** eg heat, light or a liquid when it takes it in or soaks it up: *Plants absorb light from the sun and moisture from the soil.* □ *You wear this patch on your arm and the drug is absorbed through the skin.*

2 A smaller organization or business is **absorbed** into a larger one when it becomes part of it. **3** A person, thing or system **absorbs** something such as a shock or change when they deal with it without being badly affected or damaged by it. **4** You **absorb** facts when you learn them. [same as take in] **5** You are **absorbed**

in something such as a book or task when you are concentrating completely on it, and paying attention to nothing else. [same as **engross**, **preoccupy**] — *adjective* **absorbing**: an absorbing play. [same as **interesting**, **fascinating**]

absorbent /əb'zɔ:bənt/ *adjective*

An **absorbent** substance or material soaks up liquid or moisture. — *noun* (uncount) **absorbency**: the absorbency of the material.

absorption /əb'zɔ:pʃən/ *noun* (uncount)

1 **Absorption** is the process of absorbing liquid, light, heat or gas. **2** Someone's **absorption** in something such as a book or task is their state of being completely absorbed by it and concentrating on it wholly.

abstain /əb'steɪn/ *verb*: **abstains**, **abstaining**, **abstained**

1 You **abstain** from something that you enjoy, such as food or alcohol, when you choose not to have it. **2** You **abstain** during an election or vote when you decide not to vote yourself.

abstemious /əb'sti:mɪəs/ *adjective* (formal)

An **abstemious** person is careful not to eat or drink too much.

abstention /əb'stenʃən/ *noun*: **abstentions**

1 A decision not to vote, or a person who decides not to vote, is an **abstention**. **2** (uncount) **Abstention** is the refusal or avoiding of food or drink.

abstinence /'abstɪnəns/ *noun* (uncount)

Abstinence is the practice of going without something you enjoy, eg food or drink.

abstract *adjective; noun; verb*

▷ *adjective* /'abstrakt/

1 (grammar) An **abstract** noun is one that represents an idea or quality rather than an actual physical object: *abstract nouns such as truth and beauty*. [opposite **concrete**] **2** **Abstract** reasoning and argument deal with ideas and principles in a general and theoretical way rather than with particular things or happenings. **3** (art) An **abstract** painting or sculpture uses shapes and patterns to represent ideas and objects in a symbolic rather than realistic manner.

▷ *noun* /'abstrakt/: **abstracts**

An **abstract** of a book, article, report, lecture or speech is a brief statement of its subject matter and arguments. [same as **summary**]

▷ *verb* /əb'strakt/: **abstracts**, **abstracting**, **abstracted**

You **abstract** a book or article when you reduce its subject matter and arguments to a brief statement. [same as **summarize**]

▷ *phrase* You discuss something **in the abstract** when you talk about it in a purely theoretical way, without reference to actual examples or instances.

abstracted /əb'straktɪd/ *adjective*

An **abstracted** expression on someone's face shows that they are thinking about something not connected with what is happening around them. [same as **preoccupied**]

abstraction /əb'strakʃən/ *noun*: **abstractions**

An **abstraction** is an idea or principle considered or discussed in a purely theoretical way without reference to actual examples and instances: *philosophical abstractions*.

abstruse /əb'stru:s/ *adjective*

An **abstruse** subject or argument is difficult to understand, usually because it is unfamiliar, or uses terms that are unfamiliar to most people. [same as **obscure**, **cryptic**]

absurd /əb'sɜ:ɪd/ *adjective*

You call something **absurd** if you think it is stupid or ridiculous: *That's the most absurd idea I ever heard.*

□ *It is absurd that the law should deny women this privilege.* — *noun* (uncount or count) **absurdity**: the absurdities of English spelling. — *adverb* **absurdly**: absurdly optimistic sales forecasts.

abundance /ə'bʌndəns/ *noun* (uncount, or used in the singular)

An **abundance** of something is a plentiful supply of it: *The visitor to Oxford has an abundance of sights to see.* [same as **wealth**; opposite **shortage**, **dearth**]

▷ *phrase* Something exists **in abundance** if there is plenty of it: *There was food and drink in abundance.*

abundant /ə'bʌndənt/ *adjective*

Something is **abundant** if there is plenty of it: *We have abundant evidence of the dangers of smoking.* [same as **plentiful**, **ample**]

abundantly /ə'bʌndəntli/ *adverb*

1 (intensifying) Something is **abundantly** clear or obvious if there is more than enough evidence for it or proof of it. **2** Something occurs **abundantly** if it is found in large quantities: *Mushrooms are found most abundantly in the early autumn.*

abuse *verb; noun*

▷ *verb* /ə'bju:z/: **abuses**, **abusing**, **abused**

1 You **abuse** something such as your power or authority when you make use of it to do something wrong. **2** Someone **abuses** another person **a** when they insult them or speak rudely to them or about them, **b** if they treat them cruelly or harm them sexually: *Some of the children had been sexually abused.* **3** People **abuse** drugs, especially dangerous drugs that lead to addiction, if they take them unnecessarily and habitually.

▷ *noun* /ə'bju:z/: **abuses**

1 (uncount or count) **Abuse**, or an **abuse**, of something such as one's power or authority, is the practice, or an example, of using it to do something wrong. **2** (uncount) **Abuse** of a person is cruel or sexually harmful treatment of them: *child abuse* □ *Some wives suffer years of abuse and never report it.* **3** **Abuse** is rude or insulting words said to or about someone: *Most immigrants say they're used to having abuse shouted after them.* **4** **Drug abuse** is the unnecessary and habitual taking of drugs, especially those that lead to addiction.

abusive /ə'bju:sɪv/ *adjective*

You are being **abusive** when you say something rude or insulting to or about another person: *abusive language*.

abysmal /ə'bɪzməl/ *adjective* (informal)

Abysmal means bad, shocking or disgraceful: *He has an abysmal ignorance of grammar.* — *adverb* **abysmally**: *She treated him abysmally.*

abyss /ə'bɪs/ *noun*: **abysses**

1 An **abyss** is a large and dangerous hole, pit or opening in the ground, so deep that you cannot see the bottom. **2** (literary) An **abyss** is also a dangerous situation that could involve you or others in disaster if you do not avoid it: *We must draw back from the abyss of war.* **3** (literary) Someone who is in an **abyss** of despair, grief or misery is deeply unhappy. [same as **the depths**]

academic /'akædemɪk/ *adjective*

▷ *adjective*

1 **Academic** means relating to places of education such as schools or universities, or to the teaching and studying done in them: *Britain's academic system* □ *the start of the academic year* **2** An **academic** subject is a non-technical or non-practical one for which you have to use your mind and memory: *He enjoyed drawing and painting more than the academic subjects.* **3** An **academic** person is someone who is good at

study and research, and enjoys them. [*same as studios*] **4** You call a remark or question **academic** if it has no practical relevance: *I can't go out tonight, so the question of where to go and eat is academic.* — **adverb academically:** *Even as a child she was academically inclined.*

academy /əˈkadəmi/ *noun*: **academies**

1 An **academy** is a school or college, especially one that provides training in a particular subject or skill: *The Royal Academy of Music.* **2** An **academy** is also a society or institution founded to encourage the arts or sciences, or the building it uses: *The Royal Academy of Arts, Piccadilly.*

accede /əkˈsiːd/ *verb* (*formal*): **accedes, acceding, acceded**
You **accede** to a request when you agree to it.

accelerate /əkˈseləreɪt/ *verb*: **accelerates, accelerating, accelerated**

1 Drivers or vehicles **accelerate** when they go faster: *Some drivers accelerate deliberately when you're trying to overtake them.* [*same as speed up*] **2** The rate at which something happens **accelerates** when it increases: *Plant growth accelerates in the spring.* [*same as speed up*]

acceleration /əkˈseləˈreɪʃən/ *noun* (*uncount*)

1 **Acceleration** is the process of going faster or of increasing the speed of something. **2** The **acceleration** of a vehicle is its capacity to increase speed and the rate at which it does so: *The De Luxe model has even better acceleration.*

accelerator /əkˈseləreɪtə(r)/ *noun*: **accelerators**

The **accelerator** in a vehicle is the foot pedal that you press to go faster. [*see picture at car*]

accent *noun; verb*

▷ **noun** /ˈæksənt/: **accents**

1 The **accent** you speak with is your individual way of pronouncing the words of a language, especially as an indication of your social class or the area or country you come from: *The caller had a strong Irish accent.*

2 An **accent** is also a mark placed over or under a letter or syllable to show how it is pronounced: *'Elite' is sometimes spelt 'élite', with an acute accent on the 'e'.*

3 In speaking words or playing music, you put the **accent** on the syllable or note that you speak or play with a heavier stress, or more loudly, than the others: *The accent comes on the second syllable.* [*same as stress*]

4 You put the **accent** on a particular feature of something when you emphasize it or give it special importance: *In this dictionary the accent is on ease of use.* [*same as emphasize*]

▷ **verb** /əkˈsɛnt/: **accents, accenting, accented**

In speaking words or playing music, you **accent** a syllable or note when you make it louder, or stress it more heavily, than the others.

accentuate /əkˈsɛntʃuət/ *verb*: **accentuates, accentuating, accentuated**

A feature or quality is **accentuated** when it is emphasized or made more noticeable by some circumstance: *The style of her dress accentuated her small waist.* [*same as emphasize, highlight*]

accept /əkˈsept/ *verb*: **accepts, accepting, accepted**

1 a You **accept** something that is being offered to you when you agree to take it: *I've decided to accept the job in America.* □ *Miraculously, her novel was accepted by the first publisher she approached.* □ *We regret that we cannot accept cheques without a banker's card.* **b** You **accept** an offer or an invitation when you say 'yes' to it: *I thankfully accepted her offer of a bed for the night.* □ *They didn't invite me to the wedding, but I wouldn't have accepted anyway.* **c** You **accept** advice or a proposal from someone when you are willing to do as

they suggest. **d** You **accept** a story, theory or explanation if you are willing to believe it. **e** (*formal*) When offering someone something such as sympathy or an apology, you can say, eg 'please **accept** my apology'.

2 A machine **accepts** cash in a particular form if it operates as it should when the cash is inserted: *This machine accepts the old 10-penny piece.* [*same as take*]

3 a You **accept** the blame for something when you admit you are responsible for it. **b** You **accept** a fact, situation or argument when you admit its existence or truth: *I still can't accept the fact that he's dead.* □ *I accept that we must teach children more grammar.*

c You **accept** something unpleasant or unsatisfactory, such as illness or ill-treatment, if you are willing to tolerate it without complaining or protesting. **d** You **accept** something such as a risk, danger, challenge or responsibility if you are willing to face it, eg as part of your job.

4 a You **are accepted** by a college or university, or by a firm or other organization, if they give you a place or a job there: *I've been accepted for the training course.* **b** People **accept** you when they get used to you and begin to treat you as if you belong to their group: *His children never really accepted his second wife.*

acceptable /əkˈseptəbəl/ *adjective*

1 Something is **acceptable** if it is generally tolerated or allowed to happen: *You must make it clear to her that her behaviour is not acceptable.* [*same as admissible*]

2 Something is **acceptable** if it is considered satisfactory or pleasing: *I think we've at last found a solution that is acceptable to everyone.* [*opposite unacceptable*] — **adverb acceptably:** *For once he looked acceptably tidy.*

acceptance /əkˈseptəns/ *noun* (*usually uncount*): **acceptances**

1 **Acceptance** of an offer, invitation, proposal, suggestion or challenge is the act of accepting it: *He was flattered by her acceptance of his advice.* □ *She immediately wrote a letter of acceptance.* **2** (*count*) An **acceptance** is a letter or other communication announcing the acceptance eg of an invitation, of a student for a university place, or of a book for publication. **3** An idea gains **acceptance** as more people start believing it. [*same as credence*]

4 A person gains **acceptance** in a group when he or she begins to be treated by its members as one of themselves. **5** Your **acceptance** of a situation is your willingness to tolerate it, or your acknowledgement that it cannot be changed.

accepted /əkˈseptɪd/ *adjective*

An **accepted** practice, fact or theory is one that people have learnt to acknowledge as permitted or correct. [*same as recognized, established*]

access /ˈæksɛs/ *noun; verb*
▷ **noun** (*uncount*)

1 **Access** to a place is a means of approaching or entering it: *We still don't know how the thieves gained access.* **2** **Access** to someone or something is the right to see them: *No-one except the librarian has access to these manuscripts.* □ *She tried to see her husband in prison but was denied access.* □ *The divorce court granted him access to his children.*

▷ **verb**: **accesses, accessing, accessed**

You **access** facts or files in a computer when you locate and use them.

accessible /əkˈsɛsəbəl/ *adjective*

1 A place is **accessible** if it is possible to reach it: *The village is accessible from the motorway.* □ *The cave is only accessible at low tide.* **2** A book, subject, work of art or piece of music is **accessible** if people find it easy to understand, appreciate or enjoy. **3** Things that are

accessible to people are easily available: *The voters' lists are accessible to everyone at the local library.*

accession /ək'seʃən/ *noun*: **accessions**

1 (uncount) The **accession** of a king or queen to the throne is the official start of their rule. **2** An **accession** is a newly obtained item, eg a new book added to a library. [same as **addition**, **acquisition**]

accessory /ək'sesəri/ *noun*: **accessories**

1 **Accessories** are extra parts or items you can add to eg a computer or a car that enable it to do more jobs for you: *With the printer and other accessories the computer cost her £2000.* **2** In women's clothing, **accessories** are items such as gloves, hats, belts, shoes and handbags, especially when they are specially chosen to match, or contrast with, the main outfit. **3** (legal) An **accessory** to a crime is a person who helps the criminal in some way, or who knows about the crime but does not tell the police. [compare **accomplice**]

accident /'æksɪdənt/ *noun*: **accidents**

An **accident** is an unexpected or unplanned happening, especially one that causes damage or injury: *Her husband was killed in a car accident.* □ *She's had an accident with the kettle and burnt herself.* □ *I didn't mean to break it; it was an accident.*

▷ **phrase** Something, whether good or bad, happens **by accident** if it happens unexpectedly, without planning: *I discovered by accident that the programme was on when I was changing channels.* [same as **by chance**, **accidentally**]

accidental /æksɪdəntəl/ *adjective*

Something that is **accidental** occurs by chance: *The jury brought in a verdict of accidental death.* — **adverb accidentally**: *He kicked her accidentally.* □ *We accidentally discovered the right answer.*

acclaim /ə'kleɪm/ *verb*; *noun*

▷ **verb**: **acclaims**, **acclaiming**, **acclaimed**

Someone or something is **acclaimed** when they are enthusiastically praised or seen as being something new or important: *Their work is being acclaimed as the greatest breakthrough of the decade in cancer research.* [same as **hail**]

▷ **noun** (uncount)

Something such as a new book or show meets with great **acclaim** if people praise it enthusiastically.

acclimatize or **acclimatise** /ə'klɪmətaɪz/ *verb*: **acclimatizes**, **acclimatizing**, **acclimatized**

You **acclimatize**, **get acclimatized**, or **acclimatize** yourself, to something when you become used to it: *It didn't take him long to acclimatize to Singapore's humidity.* [same as **adjust**]

accommodate /ə'kɒmədeɪt/ *verb*: **accommodates**, **accommodating**, **accommodated**

1 You **accommodate** someone somewhere when you provide them with a place to stay, live or work: *Some of the homeless families are being temporarily accommodated in hotels.* [same as **put up**] **2** A place can **accommodate** a certain number of people or things if it has enough room for them: *The new conference centre can accommodate up to 400 delegates.* [same as **take**, **hold**] **3** (formal) You **accommodate** a person when you give them what they need or help them in the way they ask you to. [same as **oblige**]

accommodating /ə'kɒmədeɪtɪŋ/ *adjective*

Someone who is **accommodating** is willing to help you, eg by altering arrangements to suit you: *My boss is always very accommodating when any of my children are ill.* [same as **obliging**]

accommodation /ə'kɒmə'deɪʃən/ *noun* (usually uncount)

Accommodation is a room, apartment, house, hotel or

other building to stay, live or work in: *The tourist information office may be able to find you accommodation.*

accompaniment /ə'kæmpənɪmənt/ *noun*: **accompaniments**

1 (uncount or count) The **accompaniment** to a song, or to a tune played on a solo instrument, is the music played, eg on a piano, to give it backing and support: *Some of her songs are sung to a cello accompaniment.*

2 Something that is an **accompaniment** to something else is found with it or goes with it: *Serve the white wine as an accompaniment to fish.*

accompanist /ə'kæmpənɪst/ *noun*: **accompanists**

An **accompanist** is a person who plays a musical accompaniment, especially on the piano, for a song or instrumental solo.

accompany /ə'kæmpəni/ *verb*: **accompanies**, **accompanying**, **accompanied**

1 You **accompany** someone somewhere when you go with them: *In the doorway stood her son, accompanied by a policeman.* **2** One thing **accompanies** another if it is found with it or goes with it: *The new edition of the dictionary is accompanied by a pronunciation cassette.*

3 You **accompany** someone who is singing or playing a solo instrument when you play music that gives them backing and support.

accomplice /ə'kæmplɪs/ or /ə'kɒmplɪs/ *noun*: **accomplices**

A criminal's **accomplice** is a person who helps them to commit the crime. [compare **accessory**]

accomplish /ə'kæmplɪʃ/ or /ə'kɒmplɪʃ/ *verb*: **accomplishes**, **accomplishing**, **accomplished**

You **accomplish** something when you manage to do it: *The task was accomplished in less than the time allowed.* □ *Unless you practise you'll accomplish nothing.* [same as **achieve**]

accomplished /ə'kæmplɪʃt/ or /ə'kɒmplɪʃt/ *adjective*

Someone who is **accomplished** at something is skilful at it: *She was an accomplished pianist as well as singer.*

accomplishment /ə'kæmplɪʃmənt/ or /ə'kɒmplɪʃmənt/ *noun*: **accomplishments**

1 (uncount) The **accomplishment** of a task is the completing of it; the **accomplishment** of an object or goal is the achieving of it. **2** Your **accomplishments** are your skills and talents: *One of his less-well-known accomplishments was his ability to draw cartoons.*

3 Something impressive that has been achieved is sometimes referred to as 'no mean **accomplishment**'. [same as **feat**, **achievement**]

accord /ə'kɔ:d/ *verb*; *noun*

▷ **verb** (formal): **accords**, **according**, **accorded**

1 One thing **accords** with another if it fits with, agrees with, or corresponds to, it: *The newspaper review of the play didn't in the least accord with my opinion of it.*

2 You **accord** a person or their achievements something such as approval when you give it to them: *In time, her work will be accorded the recognition it deserves.* [same as **grant**]

▷ **noun** (uncount; formal)

People are in **accord** when they agree with each other: *I'd say my wife and I were in accord over most things.*

▷ **phrase** You do something of **your own accord** if you do it without anyone asking you to: *He'll soon get bored of screaming and stop of his own accord.*

accordance /ə'kɔ:dəns/ *noun* (uncount)

▷ **phrase** Something is done or happens **in accordance** with a rule, law or principle, if it obeys it: *Nowadays you are encouraged to look after yourself first, which is not in accordance with Christian principles.*

according /ə'kɔ:dn̩/

▷ **phrase**

1 You say that something is so **according** to a person or other source when you are quoting that person or source: *According to this book we ought to be educating our children at home.*

You use **according to** when you are quoting another person or something they have written. When you are quoting your own opinion you use a phrase such as 'in my opinion': *In my view (not according to me) he's making a mistake.*

2 Things happen **according to** a system or a plan if they go as it says they should: *The wedding arrangements all went according to plan.* **3** Something is organized **according to** a particular system if it is organized on the basis of this system: *The books are arranged according to subject.*

accordingly /ə'kɔ:dn̩l/ **adverb**

1 You use **accordingly** to mean 'as a result of that', or 'for that reason': *He tended to be dishonest and was distrusted accordingly.* **2** **Accordingly** also means 'to suit the occasion' or 'appropriately': *The forecast said it would be hot and I dressed accordingly.*

accordion /ə'kɔ:dn̩/ **noun: accordions**

An **accordion** is a box-like musical instrument, with an expandable middle section, that you hold between both hands and play by pressing keys or buttons with your fingers.

accost /ə'kɒst/ **verb: accosts, accosting, accosted**

Someone, usually a stranger, **accosts** you when they approach you face to face and speak to you boldly, or even threateningly: *You often get accosted by beggars in the street nowadays.*

account /ə'kaʊnt/ **noun; verb**

▷ **noun: accounts**

1 An **account** of an event or happening is a description or report of it: *You can read his own personal account of the expedition in his journal.* **2** You give an **account** of your behaviour or movements when you explain them or give details of them: *The police asked everyone for an account of their movements the previous Saturday.* **3** Your **account** with a bank is your arrangement to keep money there and take it out when you need it; your **account** is also the amount of money you have in the bank at any time: *He withdrew £200 from his account on 15 July.* □ *My account is already overdrawn.* □ *I'd like to open a bank account.* **4** Your **account** with a shop or business is your arrangement to obtain goods or services there on credit, and pay for them later, usually at the end of the month: *I've got an account at the grocer's.* **5** (used in the plural) The **accounts** of a business or organization are the day-to-day records it keeps of the money it receives and spends: *The auditors discovered irregularities in the accounts.*

▷ **phrases** **1** You say something is true **by all accounts** if it is the general opinion of the people you are inclined to believe: *It'll be a match worth watching, by all accounts.* **2** You say something is **of no account** if it is not important, or does not matter: *Whether or not you see him again is of no account to me.* **3** You do something **on account of** a thing or person if you do it because of them: *He walked slowly on account of his heart.* □ *Don't stay at home on my account.* **4** You say that something should **on no account**, or **not on any account**, be done, if it must never be done: *Don't on any account switch off the computer.* [same as **in no circumstances**] **5** You **take something into account** or **take account of** something if it is one of the things you think about it or consider when making a decision,

judgement or statement: *Remember to take your travelling expenses into account when you submit your bill.* [same as **take into consideration**]

▷ **verb: accounts, accounting, accounted**

phrasal verb

account for **1** You **account for** something that has happened when you explain it: *I couldn't account for the mistake.* □ *How do you account for the missing money?* □ *Ah, that accounts for her strange behaviour this morning.* **2** Something **accounts for** a proportion of something if it amounts to or constitutes that proportion: *Exports to the Far East account for at least a third of our sales abroad.* [same as **make up**]

accountable /ə'kaʊntəbəl/ **adjective**

1 You are **accountable** for something if you are responsible for it: *With a mental age of seven, the man was not accountable for his actions.* [same as **responsible**] **2** You are **accountable** to someone for something if it is your duty to explain to them any action or incident concerning it: *You will be accountable to me for office discipline.* [same as **responsible**]

accountancy /ə'kaʊntəns/ **noun (uncount)**

Accountancy is the work or profession of preparing and keeping financial records or accounts, eg those of a business or organization: *she was taking a course in accountancy.*

accountant /ə'kaʊntənt/ **noun: accountants**

An **accountant** is a person who prepares and keeps financial accounts, eg in a business or organization.

accounting /ə'kaʊntɪŋ/ **noun (uncount)**

Accounting is the work of preparing or keeping financial accounts and records: *Our firm has recently installed a new accounting system.*

accredited /ə'kredɪtɪd/ **adjective**

A business of a specified type or a person in a specified job is **accredited** if they have official recognition for the work they do: *an accredited agent.*

accumulate /ə'kjʊ:mjʊleɪt/ **verb: accumulates, accumulating, accumulated**

You **accumulate** things, or they **accumulate**, when you collect them, or they collect, in an increasing quantity: *I've accumulated far too many books over the last few years.* — **noun (uncount or count) accumulation** /ə'kjʊ:mjʊleɪʃən/: *Pain increases with the gradual accumulation of blood in the joints.* □ *He promised to deal with any small accumulations of mail after the holiday.*

accuracy /ə'kjʊərəs/ **noun (uncount)**

1 **Accuracy** is the quality of being truthful or correct: *You can't rely on the accuracy of the reporting in a lot of these newspapers.* **2** The **accuracy** of a person or machine in performing a task is their ability to do it with precision, or without any errors: *Weather-forecasters now achieve something like 90% accuracy.* [opposite **inaccuracy**]

accurate /ə'kjʊərə/ **adjective**

1 A report or description that is **accurate** is a true representation of what it reports or describes: *On the whole the programme provided an accurate picture of the effects of AIDS.* **2** A machine, or a person, that is **accurate** does a task with precision, without making mistakes: *The test is only 75% accurate.* □ *You were pretty accurate in your calculations.* [opposite **inaccurate**] — **adverb accurately**: *The incident was not accurately reported.*

accusation /ə'kjʊ:zeɪʃən/ **noun: accusations**

1 An **accusation** is a statement charging someone with having done something wrong, eg with having com-

mitted a crime: *An accusation of fraud was brought against her.* **2** (uncount) Your voice, expression or eyes are full of **accusation** when they indicate to someone that you think they have done something wrong.

accuse /ə'kju:z/ verb: **accuses, accusing, accused**

1 Someone **accuses** you of something when they charge you with having done something wrong: *Are you accusing me of cheating?* **2** Someone who is on trial for a crime is **accused** of that crime: *He stands accused of murder.*

accused /ə'kju:z/ noun (singular or plural)

The **accused** is or are the person or people on trial for a crime: *The accused have decided to plead guilty.*

accuser /ə'kju:zə(r)/ noun: **accusers**

Your **accuser** is the person who accuses you of a crime or of doing wrong.

accusing /ə'kju:zɪŋ/ adjective

Someone gives you an **accusing** look, or says something in an **accusing** voice, when their look or voice suggest that you have done something wrong. — **adverb accusingly**: *'Look at that scratch on the door,' she said accusingly.*

accustom /ə'kʌstəm/ verb: **accustoms, accustoming, accustomed**

You **accustom** yourself to something new when you manage to get used to it or familiarize yourself with it: *I'm gradually accustoming myself to the new software.*

accustomed /ə'kʌstəmd/ adjective

1 You are **accustomed**, or become **accustomed**, to something when you are, or get, used to it: *Don't move till your eyes become accustomed to the dark.*

2 **Accustomed** also means usual: *She was sitting in her accustomed chair.* [same as **customary**]

ace /eɪs/ noun: **aces**

1 (cards) The **ace** is the card with a single symbol: *She was holding the ace of hearts.* **2** (often **adjectival**) An **ace** is also a person who is excellent at something: *the flying aces of World War I* □ *She's an ace shot with a rifle.* **3** (tennis) An **ace** is a serve that is so fast and cleverly placed that the opposing player cannot hit the ball back.

ache /eɪk/ verb; noun

▷ **verb**: **aches, aching, ached**

1 You, or a part of you, **aches** when you have a continuous, dull rather than sharp, pain: *I'm aching all over.* □ *My legs ache after that walk.* **2** You say you are **aching** for something, or to do something, if you want it, or want to do it, very much: *I was aching to tell her about my promotion.* [same as **long**]

▷ **noun**: **aches**

An **ache** is a continuous dull pain: *He began to tell me all about his aches and pains.*

-ache /eɪk/: **-aches**

You use **-ache** with *head* and *stomach* to form countable nouns, and with *back*, *ear* and *tooth* to form usually uncountable nouns, that mean pain in those parts of the body: *He gets terrible headaches.* □ *Have you got toothache again?*

achieve /ə'tʃi:v/ verb: **achieves, achieving, achieved**

1 You **achieve** something when you succeed in doing it or getting it done, usually with some effort: *You won't achieve much sitting around looking miserable.* □ *It's a relief to have achieved agreement on a few points at last.* **2** You **achieve** an aim or ambition when you succeed in fulfilling it: *I've achieved a few of the goals I set myself.*

achievement /ə'tʃi:vmənt/ noun: **achievements**

1 An **achievement** is something you have succeeded in doing or getting done, especially with some effort:

Getting the whole family together for the weekend was quite an achievement. □ *It's a small step in the right direction but hardly a major achievement.* **2** (uncount) The **achievement** of something is the process or fact of achieving it: *It's nice to finish the day's work with a sense of achievement.*

acid /ə'sɪd/ noun; adjective

▷ **noun** (chemistry): **acids**

1 (count or uncount) **Acid**, or an **acid**, is a substance, usually in liquid form, that contains hydrogen, is able to dissolve metals and form salts, and is likely to burn holes in clothing and damage skin: *a bottle of sulphuric acid* □ *Use one of the weaker acids.* [opposite **alkali**] **2** (uncount; informal) **Acid** is the drug LSD.

▷ **adjective**

1 An **acid** substance contains acid: *What grows well in an acid soil?* [opposite **alkaline**] **2** **Acid** fruits are those such as lemons, which have a sour taste: *The juice tasted acid.* **3** An **acid** remark is bitter or unkind. [same as **sarcastic**] — **adverb acidly**: *'It's a woman driver,' he observed acidly.*

acidic /ə'sɪdɪk/ adjective

Acidic substances contain acid or taste acid.

acidity /ə'sɪdɪti/ noun (uncount)

Acidity is the quality, in a substance, of being acid in taste or content, or, in a remark, of being bitter or unkind.

acid rain /ə'sɪd 'reɪn/ noun (uncount)

Acid rain is rain that contains harmful acids formed from waste gases released into the atmosphere *eg* from factories.

acknowledge /ə'kɒnlɪdʒ/ verb: **acknowledges, acknowledging, acknowledged**

1 You **acknowledge** something, or that something is so, when you admit it or recognize it as a fact: *Most people would acknowledge her as one of the greatest philosophers of this century.* **2** You **acknowledge** someone as what they claim, or are claimed, to be, when you officially recognize them as that thing: *He never acknowledged the boy as his son.* **3** You **acknowledge** a letter or parcel, or **acknowledge** receipt of it, by telling the sender it has arrived, and thanking them: *I still haven't acknowledged that book from Erik.* **4** When you meet someone you know, you **acknowledge** them by nodding, smiling or waving, to show that you have seen and recognized them. **5** The writer of a book or article **acknowledges** the contribution of people who helped with it by mentioning and thanking them, *eg* in the introduction. **6** A performer or speaker **acknowledges** the audience's applause by *eg* bowing to show they appreciate it; you **acknowledge** praise or a compliment by thanking the person who gives it.

acknowledgement or **acknowledgment** /ə'kɒnlɪdʒmənt/ noun: **acknowledgements**

1 (uncount or count) **Acknowledgement** is the act of acknowledging something: *His gesture was an acknowledgement of defeat.* □ *She recognized him and waved a hand in acknowledgement.* **2** An **acknowledgement** of a letter or parcel is a message to the sender saying it has arrived, and thanking them: *I sent in my application last week and have already had an acknowledgement.* **3** The **acknowledgements** in a book or article are a section in the introduction or at the end in which the writer lists and thanks those who have helped with it.

acne /'akni/ noun (uncount)

Acne is an unhealthy condition of the skin, especially of greasy skin, in which the pores become infected and inflamed, so that red spots appear on the face, neck and back.

acorn /eɪkɔːn/ *noun*: acorns

An **acorn** is the nut-like fruit of the oak tree, which has a cup-shaped outer case.

acoustic /ə'kuːstɪk/ *adjective*

1 **Acoustic** means concerned with sound, or with the sense of hearing, or with acoustics. **2** An **acoustic** guitar or piano is the normal traditional kind, not an electric one. — *adverb* **acoustically**: The smaller hall is better **acoustically**.

acoustics /ə'kuːstɪks/ *noun*

1 (*plural*) The **acoustics** of a hall, room or theatre are the qualities of it that determine how well or clearly sound, especially music or speech, can be heard in it: The **acoustics** are poor in here. **2** (*uncount*) **Acoustics** is the science of sound.

acquaint /ə'kweɪnt/ *verb* (*formal*): acquaints, acquainting, acquainted

You **acquaint** someone with something when you inform them of it: Let me **acquaint** you with the facts of the case.

acquaintance /ə'kweɪntəns/ *noun*: acquaintances

1 An **acquaintance** is someone you know: It's a long job informing your friends and acquaintances of your change of address. **2** (*used in the singular*) Your **acquaintance** with a person is your friendship with them or the circumstance of your knowing them: How did your **acquaintance** with her begin? **3** (*used in the singular*) Your **acquaintance** with something is your knowledge of it or familiarity with it: She has some **acquaintance** with the Czech language.

▷ **phrases** **1** You **make the acquaintance** of someone when you meet them and get to know them: I made his **acquaintance** at University. **2** A person of your **acquaintance** is someone you know. **3** You have a **passing acquaintance** with someone if you know them slightly.

acquainted /ə'kweɪntɪd/ *adjective*

1 You are **acquainted** with a person if you know them or have met them: I'm **acquainted** with her but don't know her well. □ How did you two become **acquainted**? □ It's time we got better **acquainted**. **2** (*formal*) You are **acquainted** with something if you have some knowledge of it or are familiar with it: I'm not **acquainted** with the book you mean. [*opposite unfamiliar*]

acquiesce /əkwiːs/ *verb* (*formal*): acquiesces, acquiescing, acquiesced

You **acquiesce** in a plan, or **acquiesce** to a demand, when you agree to it, especially unwillingly. [*same as consent*] — *noun* (*uncount*) **acquiescence**: She took his silence for **acquiescence**.

acquire /ə'kwɪə(r)/ *verb*: acquires, acquiring, acquired

1 You **acquire** something when you get it or obtain it: I've managed to **acquire** a copy of the report. **2** You **acquire** a skill, ability, habit or liking by developing it or establishing it gradually: You should go to bed before midnight; it's a good habit to **acquire**. □ It was in the Far East that I **acquired** a liking for shellfish.

acquired /ə'kwɪəd/ *adjective*

1 **Acquired** characteristics are those that you develop, in contrast to those you are born with. **2** An **acquired** taste is something that people develop a liking for only gradually, rather than immediately: Oysters are an **acquired** taste.

acquisition /əkwiːzɪʃən/ *noun*: acquisitions

1 An **acquisition** is something you have obtained: Her latest **acquisition** is a car phone. **2** (*uncount*) The **acquisition** of something, eg a possession or skill, is the process of gaining it.

acquit /ə'kwɪt/ *verb*: acquits, acquitting, acquitted

1 Someone who is on trial is **acquitted** of the crime they are accused of when the judge declares them innocent of it: Only one of the accused was **convicted** of murder, the rest were **acquitted**. [*same as clear; opposite convict*] **2** You **acquit** yourself well or badly when you behave or perform well or badly: She **acquitted** herself satisfactorily at the interview. [*same as conduct*]

acquittal /ə'kwɪtəl/ *noun* (*uncount or count*): **acquittals**
Acquittal, or an **acquittal**, is the act by a judge of declaring someone innocent of the crime of which they have been accused. [*opposite conviction*]

acre /eɪkə(r)/ *noun*: acres

An **acre** is a measurement of land area, equal to 4840 square yards or 4047 square metres.

acreage /eɪkərɪdʒ/ *noun* (*uncount*)

The **acreage** of a piece of land is its measurement in acres.

acrid /'akrɪd/ *adjective*

1 An **acrid** taste or smell is a strong and unpleasantly bitter one: The room began to fill with **acrid** smoke. **2** An **acrid** comment is a bitterly worded one expressing disgust or scorn. [*same as caustic*]

acrimonious /'akrɪmɒniəs/ *adjective*

An **acrimonious** discussion or quarrel is one that is full of bitter anger and ill feeling.

acrimony /'akrɪməni/ *noun* (*uncount*)

Acrimony is bitter ill feeling and quarrelling between people: Their money discussions usually ended in **acrimony**.

acrobat /'akrəbət/ *noun*: acrobats

An **acrobat** is an entertainer, eg in a circus, who performs skilful balancing acts and other athletic tricks.

acrobatic /'akrə'bætɪk/ *adjective*

1 **Acrobatic** means concerned with or involving acrobatics: an **acrobatic** display. **2** An **acrobatic** feat or movement is an athletically skilful one. — *adverb* **acrobatically**: He stood **acrobatically** poised on one leg for an instant.

acrobatics /'akrə'bætɪks/ *noun* (*plural*)

Acrobatics are athletic movements such as jumping, balancing, swinging, somersaulting, bending, standing on the head or walking on the hands: The monkeys' **acrobatics** always attract a crowd.

acronym /'akrənɪm/ *noun*: acronyms

An **acronym** is a word that is made from the first letters of words composing a title or phrase, and is used as a short form of it: The acronym ROM stands for 'read-only memory'.

across /ə'krɒs/ *preposition; adverb*▷ **preposition**

1 To go **across** somewhere or something is to move from one side of it to the other: We've somehow got to get **across** the river. □ The stream's too wide to jump **across**. □ Rain will spread right **across** the country. □ Their eyes met **across** the table. □ His shadow fell **across** her book. [*same as over*] **2** Something is **across** something else if it extends from one side of it to the other: He had long scar **across** his back. □ He stood with his arms folded **across** his chest. □ There was a temporary barrier **across** the road. **3** Something is **across** a road or river if it is on the opposite side of it: My car's parked **across** the street. □ They live **across** the road.

▷ **adverb**

1 **Across** means from one side to the other, or on the other side: There was no traffic coming, so she ran **across**. □ We flew **across** to the island. □ She glanced **across** at me. □ He lives **across** on the other side of town. [*see also over*] **2** You use **across** in giving a mea-