

wordfor  
word

# 牛津词汇辨析

Stewart Clark (英) 著  
Graham Pointon (英) 著

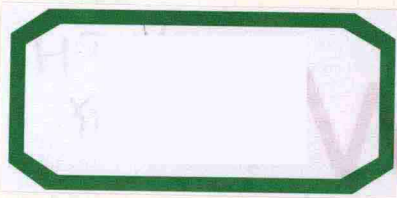
effect·brake break·m

quiet·desert dessert·p

cautious·high tall·wa

外语教学与研究出版社

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS



word for  
word

# 牛津词汇辨析

Stewart Clark (英) 著  
Graham Pointon (英) 著

effect·brake break·m  
quiet·desert dessert·j  
cautious·high tall·w

外语教学与研究出版社  
北京市西三环北路19号 (100089)  
http://www.fltrp.com  
ISBN 978-7-309-07116-1  
2007年1月第1版  
2007年1月第1次印刷  
ISBN 978-7-309-07116-1  
定价: 29.90元

外语教学与研究出版社  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS  
北京 BEIJING

京权图字：01 - 2006 - 3231

Originally published by Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford

© Oxford University Press 2003

This reprint of Word for Word originally published in English in 2003 is published by arrangement with Oxford University Press for distribution in mainland China only, excluding Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR and Taiwan, and not for export therefrom.

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

### 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

牛津词汇辨析 = Word for Word / (英)克拉克 (Clark, S.), (英)波因顿 (Pointon, G.) 著. — 北京: 外语教学与研究出版社, 2007.12

ISBN 978 - 7 - 5600 - 7120 - 6

I. 牛… II. 克… III. 英语—词汇—辨别 IV. H313

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2007) 第 194982 号

出版人: 于春迟

责任编辑: 李晶华

出版发行: 外语教学与研究出版社

社址: 北京市西三环北路 19 号 (100089)

网址: <http://www.fltrp.com>

印刷: 北京国防印刷厂

开本: 787×1092 1/16

印张: 16

版次: 2007 年 12 月第 1 版 2007 年 12 月第 1 次印刷

书号: ISBN 978 - 7 - 5600 - 7120 - 6

定价: 29.90 元

\* \* \*

如有印刷、装订质量问题出版社负责调换

制售盗版必究 举报查实奖励

版权保护办公室举报电话: (010)88817519

# 引言

词汇是人们借以表达思想、情感和反应的工具。有时您会发现，即使在母语中都难以找到最恰当的词语来传递准确的信息。英语的使用者同样面临着相同的困境：英语单词的拼写与发音关联甚微；俚语和习语夹杂在标准用法之中；多数词语有着多重含义。英语语言中充满陷阱，一不小心就会陷入其中。正如比尔·布赖森所言：“如果在一种语言中……像 fly 这样一个不起眼的词既是一种讨厌的昆虫，又是一种交通方式，还可以是男士服装上的一个关键部分，那么这门语言一定是令人困惑不已的。”（*Mother Tongue*, Penguin Books, 1990）

《牛津词汇辨析》旨在引领您躲避英语中隐藏的众多陷阱。本书收集了大约 3000 个最为常见的问题词汇。使用本书可以帮助英语学习者和使用者增强自信，提高英语书面和口语应用的技巧。与词典不同的是，本书将易混淆的词汇分组呈现：job 与 position、situation 及 post 同组，而 sensible 则与 sensitive、insensible 及 insensitive 同组。每个词条的解释简明易懂，并配有例句。以 insensible 为例，在其释义中指出：虽然含有前缀 in-，但它并不是 sensible 的反义词，例如 “The boxer was knocked insensible”。

有些词因为发音相近而易于混淆。例如 reigns 和 reins，这两个词意思完全不同，却都读成 rains，因此即使是以英语为母语的人也可能把它们搞错。另外一些易混词属于形似词，如 suit 与 suite，recover 与 re-cover。本书在辨析词语时还充分考虑了文化敏感性，因此 Asian 和 Asiatic 被归入一组，其释义指出：Asian 用于指人，Asiatic 用于指地理范畴，如果用 Asiatic 来谈论“亚洲人”则含有歧视的意味，因此必须区分这两个词语的用法。

本书中还包含大约 100 个红色标记的语言框，对于如何用英式英语及美式英语撰写书信和电子邮件、如何使用“s”所有格等语法和语用问题提供了建议。《牛津词汇辨析》不仅阐释词汇之间的区别，还是一本词汇发音、拼写和用法的指南。本书依据现代英式英语的风格和用法编写，是一本读者可以信赖的词汇工具书。

没有人希望自己的英语笑料百出，可是每天都有很多人在不知不觉中犯着滑稽可笑的错误。《牛津词汇辨析》收录了一些有趣的例子，用来提醒您躲避类似的陷阱，同时为您学习和使用英语增添乐趣。

# 使用说明

《牛津词汇辨析》引导您正确使用词语和表达方式。书中的例句有助加深读者对词义的理解，并展示如何在特定语境中运用词语。本书还包含对难点词汇发音和拼写的指导，并指出了可参考的相关词汇。当您不能立刻找到某个词语时，可以借助书后的索引快速地定位。

本书为每个词目提供了最常用的发音。参见第vi页的发音说明。

**OLD, ADVANCED AGE, ANCIENT**  
old /əʊld/ *adjective & noun*, as an adjective, means having lived or existed for a long time, or describes a person or thing as being no longer young ... See **AGED** ⇨ **AGE**.

箭头表示您可以将 **old** 与其相关词 **aged** 进行比较，**aged** 一词可在 **age** 词条下找到。

典型错误例句旁的红色三角表示该句存在语法或选词错误。



*'Beef broth with ancient Bohemian meat balls.'*  
(Restaurant menu)

发音相同或相近的词语用上角标“s”标示。

**CHEQUE<sup>s</sup>, CHECK<sup>s</sup>, CONTROL**  
cheque /tʃek/ *noun*, is only used in BE, and means a bank order: 'He felt his pockets to see whether he still had his cheque book'. This is spelt 'check' in AE.

缩略词 BE 和 AE 表示某个单词或短语在英式英语和美式英语中的用法或拼写有所区别。

# 发音说明

本书中每个词目及释义中部分词语的注音均采用国际音标 (IPA)。除特殊说明的以外, 仅标注英式发音。下面列出了国际音标符号, 并附有例句以说明发音。由于英语的拼写体系非常复杂, 相同的字母拼写在不同的单词中常常有不同的发音方式。

## 元音

i:	meet, machine
i	happy, the (在元音前)
ɪ	pit, depart
e	met
æ	mat
ɑ:	father
ɒ	hot
ɔ:	thought, law
ʊ	wool, put
u:	boot, rude
ʌ	hut, come
ɜ:	herd, bird, word, curd, colonel
ə	above, the (在辅音前), compare

## 双元音

eɪ	may, eight, mate
aɪ	might, mite, by
ɔɪ	boy
əʊ	no
aʊ	now
ɪə	here, idea
eə	there
ʊə	poor, skua

## 辅音

p, b, t, d, k, g, f, v, s, z, h, m, n, l, r, w 都代表各自在英语中最常见的发音, 如: [g] 总是与 get 相对应, 而非 general ['dʒenərəl]; [f] 总是与 fit 相对应, 而非 of [ɒv]; [s] 总是与 soft 相对应, 而非 rose [rəʊz]。

θ	thin, thigh, ether
ð	there, thy, either
ʃ	shin
ʒ	measure
tʃ	church, match
dʒ	judge
ŋ	sing
j	yacht

本书中还出现了下面这个不属于英式英语发音的符号:

ã fiancé (法语中的鼻元音)

## 重音

重音用 [ˈ] 标示, 放在重读音节的前面: important [ɪmˈpɔ:tənt]。如果单词中的另外一个音节带有次重音, 则用 [ˌ] 标示, 放在该音节的前面: correspondent [ˌkɔ:riˈspɒndənt]。

## 可以省略的发音

可以省略的发音用斜体表示:

allocate [ˈæləʊkətɪ] 第二个音节既可以是中元音 [ə], 也可以是完整的双元音 [əʊ];

competitor [kəmˈpetɪtə] 末尾的 -r 只有在后接以元音起始的单词时才读出;

postpone [pəʊstˈpəʊn] -t- 可读可不读, 取决于说话者和话语的速率 (说话的速度越快, 省略的可能性越大)。

## 音节

构成音节的辅音在底部用 [ˌ] 标示: angle [ˈæŋɡlˌ]。

在个别情况下, 可以将 [ˌ] 置于音节之间, 把一个单词的音节分隔开来: coincide [kəʊ.ɪnˈsaɪdˌ]。

## 弱读形式

许多短小的单词 (介词、冠词、限定词) 既有一个由完全元音构成的重读形式, 又有一个或几个弱读形式, 采用何种发音形式往往取决于这些词在句中的位置以及对它们的强调程度。当这类单词位于句尾, 或者被说话者特别强调时, 通常采用重读形式。非母语使用者说英语时常犯的一个错误就是很少使用弱读形式。本书在适当的地方除了标注重读发音, 还给出了弱读发音形式。

# Contents

引言	iv
使用说明	v
发音说明	vi
<b>Word for Word</b>	<b>1</b>
Bibliography	233
Index	234
Thematic guide to usage notes	250
Acknowledgements	250

# Aa

## ABIDE, ABODE

**abide** /ə'baɪd/ *verb*, when combined with 'by', means to accept or obey something: 'We have to abide by the rules'. In this sense, the past form is 'abided' /ə'baɪdɪd/. 'Abide' used with the negative of 'can' or 'could' means that the speaker cannot tolerate a person or idea: 'I can't abide the thought of living so near to his family'. An archaic meaning of 'abide' is 'to live with'. The past tense for this meaning was 'abode'.

**abode** /ə'bəʊd/ *noun*, means a dwelling, and is used in the legal phrase for someone who is homeless: 'a person of no fixed abode'. It is a formal word that is used in poetry or in the humorous expression: 'my humble abode'. More neutral alternatives are 'residence', 'house', and 'address'.

## ABILITY, CAPACITY

**ability** /ə'bɪlɪti/ *noun*, means the skill and human power to do something: 'He is a negotiator of immense ability'.

**capacity** /kə'pæsɪti/ *noun*, means the ability to produce something, or to have a talent for doing something when referring to skill. One distinction is that 'ability' is something acquired and 'capacity' is something inborn: 'His ability as a negotiator was helped by his capacity for remembering faces'. 'Capacity' also means the maximum amount that can be produced by a machine: 'This photocopier has the capacity to print fifty pages a minute'.

## ABNORMAL, SUBNORMAL

**abnormal** /æb'nɔːməl/ *adjective*, means something that differs from what is considered normal: 'Many consider that global warming has resulted in abnormal weather conditions'.

**subnormal** /sʌb'nɔːməl/ *adjective*, means something below what is considered normal: 'Many winters had subnormal temperatures'.

## ABOLISH, EXTINGUISH

**abolish** /ə'bɒlɪʃ/ *verb*, means to end or destroy customs, practices and institutions completely: 'Slavery was abolished by law in the 19th century'.

**extinguish** /ɪks'tɪŋgwɪʃ/ *verb*, means to put out a fire: 'Three weeks of heavy rain extinguished the forest fires'. It also has the figurative meaning of to destroy: 'When the talks broke down, all hope of peace was extinguished'. The related adjective and noun forms 'extinct' and 'extinction' refer specifically to an animal or plant which no longer exists.

## ABSOLUTES AND FUZZY ABSOLUTES

- One of the best examples of an absolute is *unique*, which means that there is only one of its kind, and thus, logically, should never be qualified by 'more', 'most', or 'very'. There are other words in this category such as: *absolute, complete, entire, equal, excellent, extreme, full, horizontal, ideal, impossible, infinite, parallel, perfect, perpendicular, round, square, thorough, total, utter, vertical*. Careful writers accept that if something is *horizontal* or *parallel*, it is simply that, and constructions like 'this is the more perpendicular line', 'the most horizontal line', or 'the most parallel line' should be rewritten.
- However, English as a living language often defies the laws of logic. As *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* points out, most of these absolutes have a precise core meaning but also a secondary fuzzy meaning, so that *unique* also has the fuzzy meaning of 'very remarkable', and *infinite* also means 'very great'. It is here when we indicate approximation that constructions with 'nearly', 'almost', 'close to' are used to convey approximation to the ideal/perfection: *This result was nearly ideal/perfect*.
- If comparatives are linked to such fuzzy absolutes, sometimes the result unintentionally sounds like advertising, such as: 'more perfect results', 'more excellent performance'.

## ABSTRACT, ABSTRACTEDLY

**abstract** /'æbstrækt/ *noun & adjective*, as a noun, means a summary of a report or paper, usually in about 250 words. As an adjective, 'abstract' means existing in thought or just as an idea: 'Enough abstract thought: give me one concrete example'. 'Abstract' can also refer to a direction in art and artistic expression. Note that the stress is on the first syllable.

**abstract** /əb'strækt/ *verb*, means to take away, or remove a part from a larger entity: 'The hydropower scheme meant abstracting millions of litres of water from the river'. Note that the stress is on the second syllable. This is a formal term.

**abstractedly** /əb'stræktɪdli/ *adverb*, means deep in thought and not paying attention to what is going on: 'He walked right past me, gazing abstractedly at the sky'.

## ABUSE, MISUSE

**abuse** /ə'bjuz:/ *noun*, /ə'bjuz:/ *verb*, means poor treatment or violent and improper use of something: 'He was imprisoned after being found guilty of repeated child abuse'. 'Alcohol abuse' is the excessive consumption of alcohol. Note that as a noun, 'abuse' rhymes with 'juice', but as a verb it rhymes with 'news'.

**misuse** /mɪs'ju:/ *noun*, /mɪs'ju:z/ *verb*, means the use of something dishonestly, or for a purpose that it was not designed for: 'Using that expensive Burgundy to make a gravy is a clear case of alcohol misuse'. Note that as a noun, 'misuse' rhymes with 'juice', but as a verb it rhymes with 'news'.

## ACADEMIC, SCHOLARLY, SCHOLAR

**academic** /ækə'demɪk/ *adjective & noun*, as an adjective, normally means matters associated with university education such as 'academic standards'. In this sense, it is a positive word. 'Academic' also refers to something that is without practical application and of no immediate relevance: 'We have already won the overall competition, so the score of this match is academic'. As a noun, 'academic' is used to mean a teacher or researcher in higher education.

**scholarly** /'skɒləli/ *adjective*, refers to serious academic study: 'His theories have been printed in a scholarly paper'. This is used only in a positive sense. 'Scholarly' can also be used for a person who is studious, learned or engaged in university research.

**scholar** /'skɒlər/ *noun*, means a learned person, teacher or researcher in the classics, arts, and humanities, or other non-scientific disciplines: 'She was a distinguished Latin scholar'. It can also mean the holder of a scholarship such as 'a Rhodes Scholar'.

## ACCEPT<sup>5</sup>, EXCEPT<sup>5</sup>

**accept** /ək'sept/ *verb*, means to receive something: 'He was pleased to accept the award from the Design Council'. 'Accept' also means to agree to something willingly: 'After twenty years the director accepted the need to modernize the company'.

**except** /ɪk'sept/ *preposition & verb*, as a preposition, means not including, or omitting something: 'Except for the teacher, the rest of the villagers were illiterate'. As a verb, 'except' means to leave out, but is less common than 'to exclude'. See **EXCLUDE**.

## ACCESS, EXCESS

**access** /'ækses/ *noun & verb*, means entry or admittance: 'There is no right of access for the public'. As a verb, 'access' can mean to open a computer file: 'She double-clicked and accessed the file'. It also means to reach or enter something, and the related adjective is 'accessible': 'The Open University has made university education accessible to the general public'. See **ADMIT** ⇨ **ACKNOWLEDGE**. See **ENTRY**.

**excess** /ɪk'ses/ *noun*, /'ekses/ *adjective*, means something more than is permitted or desirable: 'He had 20 kilos of excess baggage'. The related adjective is 'excessive' /ɪk'sesɪv/: 'Excessive drinking is very bad for your health'.

## ACCIDENT, MISHAP, DISASTER, CATASTROPHE

**accident** /'æksɪdənt/ *noun*, means an unintentional incident that results in damage or injury: 'There was another serious accident on that road last night'. The phrase 'by accident' means the same as 'accidentally' or 'unintentionally': 'I took the wrong coat home by accident'.

**mishap** /'mɪʃæp/ *noun*, means an unlucky accident: 'Delivery was delayed by a minor mishap in our factory'. The word 'mishap' is used for accidents that are not very serious.

**disaster** /dɪ'zɑ:stər/ *noun*, means a sudden event or serious accident that results in great damage or loss of life: 'The train crash was one of many such disasters in India'. Note that English often uses 'disaster' where other languages would use the equivalent of 'catastrophe', for example 'disaster area' and 'disaster fund'.

**catastrophe** /kə'tæstrəfi/ *noun*, means an event that results in widespread and often sudden damage or suffering: 'The earthquake was a catastrophe for the whole nation'.

### ACCOMMODATION, ACCOMMODATIONS

**accommodation** /əkəmə'deɪʃn/ *noun*, means a room or building where someone can live or stay: 'Student accommodation in town is always hard to find at the beginning of term'. Note the double 'c' and 'm'. 'Accommodation' is uncountable when used in this sense. This is also a very formal term meaning a settlement, agreement or compromise: 'The two sides came to an accommodation'. This word is only used in the singular in BE.

**accommodations** is the plural of 'accommodation', but is used only in AE: 'The cost of overnight accommodations is included in the price of the ticket'.

### ACHIEVE, ACCOMPLISH, ATTAIN

**achieve** /ə'tʃi:v/ *verb*, means to reach an objective or standard, especially over a period of time: 'He was delighted to have achieved his ambition of becoming a rock star'. The related noun is 'achievement'.

**accomplish** /ə'kʌmplɪʃ/ *verb*, can mean the same as 'achieve', but has an additional sense of successfully completing something: 'They safely accomplished the task of freeing the soldiers'. The related adjective, 'accomplished', describes a person who does something with great skill: 'She is an accomplished pianist'. The related noun is 'accomplishment'.

**attain** /ə'teɪn/ *verb*, means to reach a certain standard, and is the word to use when comparison or measurement is involved: 'She attained the highest grades in her final exams'. The related noun is 'attainment'. A less formal alternative to 'attain' is the verb 'get'.

### ACID, ACRID

**acid** /'æsɪd/ *adjective*, means sharp in taste and tone: 'The stand-up comedian had an acid sense of humour'. An 'acid test' means a crucial trial: 'The acid test is whether the software will actually work'.

**acid** /'ækrɪd/ *adjective*, means unpleasantly bitter in taste or smell: 'The acrid smell came from the burning building'. Figuratively, an 'acrid parting' means an angry and bitter departure.

### ACKNOWLEDGE, ADMIT

**acknowledge** /ək'nɒlɪdʒ/ *verb*, means to confirm that something has been received: 'The company sent me a letter acknowledging my complaint'. It also means to recognize or accept a truth: 'She has never acknowledged her responsibility in this matter'. 'Acknowledge' is used in formal contexts to mean to thank: 'I acknowledge the financial support from the Research Council'. The related noun 'acknowledgement' can also be spelt 'acknowledgment'. The plural form of the noun can mean a section of a book or report in which the author lists or thanks those who have made a contribution.

**admit** /əd'mɪt/ *verb*, means to accept responsibility: 'I admit that your complaint is justified'. It also means to enter or allow access: 'This ticket admits one'. See **ACCESS**. See **ENTRY**.

### ACOUSTIC, ACOUSTICS

**acoustic** /ə'ku:stɪk/ *adjective*, refers to hearing, sound, or the science of sound. In anatomy, an example is the 'acoustic nerve', and in sound, an 'acoustic image'. 'Acoustic' is also found in expressions such as 'acoustic guitar'. Many technical expressions use the related adjective 'acoustical' /ə'ku:stɪkl/ in terms like 'acoustical measurement' and 'acoustical shadow'. In AE, 'acoustical' means the same as 'acoustic'.

**acoustics** /ə'ku:stɪks/ *noun*, has two meanings. One is the science of sound, when, like other academic subjects ending in **-ics**, it always takes a singular verb: 'Acoustics is a challenging field'. In the second sense, 'acoustics' means the acoustic properties of a room or a building, and takes a plural verb: 'The acoustics in the Greek amphitheatre are perfect'. See **-ICS**.

### acronyms, abbreviations

- An acronym is a word formed from the initial letters of other words and is pronounced as a word, such as **AIDS** /eɪdz/ and **NATO** /'nɛtəʊ/. An abbreviation may be formed from the initial letters in a phrase or name and is read letter-by-letter, like **I,B,M** or **A,S,A,P** for 'as soon as possible' in BE. Note that it is normal to write the term in full the first time it is mentioned followed by the acronym or abbreviation in brackets. Then just the abbreviation can be used: *This is called Finite Element Modelling (FEM). Engineering design now uses FEM widely.*

## acronyms

- An acronym is written without stops and read as a word. Some of these words are used so much that it is often difficult to remember that they are acronyms. Examples are *Aids*, also written *AIDS* (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) and *PIN* (personal identification number). This often leads to the mistake of writing 'PIN number'. Most acronyms are written in capital letters, but a few are in lower case and are scarcely recognizable as acronyms as they are treated as everyday words. Examples of these are *laser* (light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation), pronounced /'leɪzə(r)/ and *radar* (radio detection and ranging), /'reɪdɑːr/. Market researchers love to produce acronyms such as *YUP* (Young Urban Professional) that occasionally survive and generate everyday words, written in lower case, such as the noun *yuppie* /'jʌpi/. Some of the acronyms that are widely adopted are carefully chosen to make catchy words like the American term *WASP* (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant). Most dictionaries of computing terms are full of acronyms such as *GIGO* /'gɑɪgəʊ/ (garbage in, garbage out).

## abbreviations

- With familiarity, an abbreviation may change into an acronym. An example is U.N.E.S.C.O., written originally as initial letters with stops, and read letter-by-letter. It has now developed into the acronym *UNESCO* /ju:'neskəʊ/. Abbreviations formed from the initial letters in the names of companies, organizations and states, such as *IBM*, *the EU* and *the USA* are written in modern dictionaries without stops. Note that there may be differences in pronunciation between English and other languages. For example, *VIP* is read as a three-letter abbreviation in English, but may be an acronym if borrowed into other languages and pronounced as a single syllable.
- Apart from names, abbreviations are also formed by writing the first letter or a few of the letters in a word, but these are to be read aloud as if the whole word was written. Examples: *dept* (department), *asst* (assistant), *Fri.* (Friday), *Mr* (Mister), *Dr* (Doctor). In BE, abbreviations which end with the final letter of the word do not have a stop, while those that do not end like that are followed by a stop. Thus 'Doctor Arthur Smith' would be abbreviated *Dr A. Smith*. In AE, stops are usual after all abbreviations, such as *Mr.*, *Ms.*, and *Dr.*

- Plurals of abbreviations are often formed with an *s* as in: *no.*, *nos.* (number/s); *fig.*, *figs.* (figure/s); *eq.*, *eqs.* (equation/s). The plural of *p.*, is *pp.* (pages). The ISO standard concerning SI units states that abbreviations such as *cm*, *h*, *kg*, *km*, *m*, and *s* are to remain unaltered in the plural and are to be written without a final stop (ISO 31-0:1992).

## non-English acronyms and abbreviations

- Foreign acronyms and abbreviations usually follow the practice of the UN and elsewhere where institutions often mix their English names with an acronym or abbreviation that is from French or German. An example of this is *Système International d'Unités*, which in English is called the *International System of Units*, but the abbreviation *SI* is used in all languages.
- Remember that it may be difficult for the speakers of one language to understand the acronyms or abbreviations of another. Many non-Spanish speakers would find it difficult to interpret *RENFE*, just as non-Francophones would not immediately understand what *ORTF* stands for. As acronyms and abbreviations in one language often have no direct equivalent in another, it is worth checking in an authoritative English dictionary that abbreviations exist before risking confusing readers with a direct translation from another language. Typical examples of such mistakes are 'w. r. t.' (correctly, *with regard to* or *regarding*) and 'f.ex.' (correctly, *for example* or *e.g.*).

## ACROSS, ABOVE, OVER (POSITIONS)

**across** /ə'krɒs/ *preposition & adverb*, means from one side to the other: 'We swam across the river'. 'Across' can either express movement: 'The plane took us across the Alps', or position: 'The pub is just across the street'. The expression 'across the board' means a situation or change that affects all levels: 'The savings made by the company will bring improvements across the board'.

**above** /ə'baʊ/ *preposition & adverb*, means at a higher level than something else without touching it: 'We are now above the Alps'. 'Above' stresses the distance or height: 'The plane was just above the trees'. It can also mean higher than a rate or a norm: 'She is well above average in mathematics'.

**over** /'əʊvər/ *preposition & adverb*, means the same as 'above', when used to describe a position that is at a higher level: 'We are now over the Alps'. However, 'over' can also mean higher than a specified figure: 'Everyone over 45 will benefit from the new legislation', or covering the surface of something: 'There was a thick layer of snow over the hills'. 'Over' is also used to mean from one side to the other, in a similar way to 'across': 'We walked over the field'. See **PREPOSITIONS**.

## ACT, ACTION

**act** /ækt/ *noun & verb*, as a noun, is usually something which is carried out once, often a deed such as a criminal act: 'The explosion was incorrectly described as an act of terrorism'. A natural disaster is often called an 'act of God' by western insurance companies. In the legal sense, an 'Act' is capitalized and means a law passed by the legislature of a country. As a verb, to 'act' means to begin a process in response to a particular situation: 'When my windows were broken for a third time I realized that I had to act'. It can also mean to perform in a film or play, or to pretend: 'He acted as if he knew nothing about the dent in the car door'.

**action** /'æksjən/ *noun*, stresses the process involved in an act that is typically directed towards a defined aim: 'The hijackers were overcome by the government's prompt military action'. It may also refer to legal proceedings: 'My client is considering taking legal action against you'.

## ACTUAL, TOPICAL, CURRENT

**actual** /'æktʃʊəl/ *adjective*, refers to a real, factual event and something which exists: 'The newspaper quoted his actual words'. 'Actual' is often contrasted with something expected or estimated: 'The actual cost was only 60% of the estimate'. 'Actual' is a word that needs to be used with care, and it must not be confused with the similarly spelt word in many other languages, which usually means 'topical' or 'current'. See **FALSE FRIENDS**.

**topical** /'tɒpɪkəl/ *adjective*, means either 'relevant' or 'of interest at the moment'. Compare: 'This film is about a topical problem' (one that is relevant and of current general interest) with: 'This film is about an actual problem' (one that is real and not imagined).

**current** /'kʌrənt/ *adjective & noun*, as an adjective, means happening at the present time: 'During the current financial crisis many families cannot afford holidays'. As a noun, 'current' means a flow of liquid, gas or electricity: 'The Gulf Stream is a current of warm water'. See **CURRENTLY** ⇨ **NOW**. See **FLOW** ⇨ **FLOAT**.



'I would like to thank Professor Jones: his comments were very actual.'

## ACUTE, CHRONIC

**acute** /ə'kjʊ:t/ *adjective*, refers to a sudden illness or a very serious occurrence: 'Following the crash, the badly injured pilot suffered acute pain'.

**chronic** /'krɒnɪk/ *adjective*, refers to a serious medical or other condition that persists for a long time: 'Seven years after the accident, the pilot was still suffering from chronic pain'.

## AD<sup>S</sup>, ADD<sup>S</sup>, ADVERT

**ad** /æd/ *noun*, is an informal short form of 'advertisement'. Both 'ad' and the plural 'ads' are typically combined with words such as 'classified' and 'small', and refer to short advertisements grouped by subject in newspaper columns: 'They went through the classified ads to find a flat to rent near the river'. Another term for 'classified ads' is 'small ads'. These are also called 'want ads' in AE.

**add** /æd/ *verb*, means to increase or to say something more. Note that if something is added, such as an 'added advantage', one advantage must already have been mentioned.

**advert** /'ædvɜ:t/ *noun*, is a short form of 'advertisement'. The word is used for all sorts of advertisements anywhere - on TV, in the media, on hoardings or billboards: 'The company placed adverts all over town to announce the opening of the new mall'.

## AD, BC

**AD** /eɪ 'di:/ stands for Anno Domini and is written before the year: 'Pompeii was destroyed in AD 79'. Some people argue that it is incorrect to use 'in AD 79' because in Latin, 'anno' means 'in the year'. However, this combination is in general use. Another criticism is that 'AD' should not be combined with

'century', because a century cannot be in the year of anything. Nevertheless, 'AD' often illogically follows 'century' for clarity: 'The church dated back to the fourth century AD'.

**BC** / **bi**: 'si:/ stands for 'before Christ', and is written after the year: 'Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC'. Note that 'AD' and 'BC' should be written in small capitals in printed text.

### ADAPT, ADOPT, ACQUIRE

**adapt** /ə'dæpt/ *verb*, means to adjust to something: 'In South Africa he had to adapt to life in the southern hemisphere'. The related noun is 'adaptation'. A person who adapts something is an 'adaptor', also spelt 'adapter', and this word is also used for the piece of equipment which allows two otherwise incompatible items to be connected.

**adopt** /ə'dɒpt/ *verb*, means to put into practice or to borrow: 'When we moved to Australia we adopted the custom of Christmas Day beach parties'. The related noun is 'adoption', which usually means taking legal responsibility for someone else's child. A person who adopts a child is usually called an 'adoptive parent'.

**acquire** /ə'kwɪər/ *verb*, means to learn or develop a skill, habit or quality: 'She acquired new habits after becoming a star in Hollywood'. The related noun is 'acquisition'.

### addresses in letters

- In modern English, all addresses are written with as few stops and commas as possible. Companies and organizations have their name on the top line of a letterhead followed by the address. However, in personal letters in English only the address is placed at the top. (When the recipient does not know the writer, the writer's name should be printed underneath his or her signature.)
- The address of the recipient is normally placed under the address of the sender. Many people place both addresses against the left-hand margin of the letter/email. Note that although the street number is placed before the street name in the UK and the USA and elsewhere, there are many countries in which this order is reversed. Try to follow the practice of the country of destination.

Visclar Ltd.  
33 Hill Lane  
Cambridge  
CB2 2QF  
England  
GB  
and:  
Clown Corporation  
3501 Market Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53201  
USA

- Common short forms in addresses are: *Ave* (Avenue), *Blvd* (Boulevard), *Rd* (Road), *Sq.* (Square), *St* (Street).
- ISO 3166-1 lists the international two-letter codes for about 240 countries. In many European countries this country code is placed in front of the postcode and place name and is followed by a hyphen, for example DK-1014 Copenhagen.

See **LETTERS AND EMAILS**.

### ADHESION, ADHERENCE

**adhesion** /əd'hɪ:ʒn/ *noun*, means the quality of sticking or glueing: 'The new type of glue did not sell very well, due to its poor adhesion'.

**adherence** /əd'hɪərəns/ *noun*, means support for a particular party or ideology: 'His adherence to the party was never in question'. This is a formal word, a more general alternative being 'support'.

### ADJACENT, ADJOINING

**adjacent** /ə'dʒeɪsnt/ *adjective*, is a general word that means either 'close to' or 'nearby', and not necessarily sharing the same boundary: 'The two military aircraft landed simultaneously on adjacent runways'.

**adjoining** /ə'dʒɔɪnɪŋ/ *adjective*, means 'next to', and always sharing the same boundary: 'The aircraft moved off the runway on to the adjoining taxiing area'. Things that are adjoining must be joined.

### adjectives

- Adjectives are words that add something to the meaning of nouns, by naming an attribute, such as a colour, or size. Examples are *green*, *large*, and *quiet*. They do not have a plural form. In English, adjectives are typically placed immediately before the noun: *a green frog*; or after verbs like *be*, *feel*, *seem*: *The water was*

*muddy*. Some adjectives may appear in only one of these positions: *When we got there, the woman was alone*, not *'an alone woman'*. Note that some adjectives end in *-ly* (*a friendly dog, a silly dog, a lovely dog*). See **ADVERBS**. See **HYPHENATION IN COMPOUNDS**.

### ADJOURN, POSTPONE, DEFER, RAIN CHECK

**adjourn** /ə'dʒɜːn/ *verb*, means to break off a meeting that has started: 'We will adjourn the meeting until next week'. More informally, when combined with 'to', 'adjourn' can also mean to move somewhere else: 'After the wedding ceremony they adjourned to the hotel for the reception'. See **CANCEL**.

**postpone** /pəʊst'pəʊn/ *verb*, means to reschedule an event or meeting that has not yet started: 'The takeover negotiations were postponed because of the director's sudden illness'.

**defer** /dɪ'fɜːr/ *verb*, means to delay making a judgement or decision: 'The committee has unfortunately deferred its decision until its next meeting'. When combined with 'to', 'defer' means to submit to another person's knowledge or decision: 'I defer to your superior mechanical expertise'. This is a formal use of the verb.

**rain check** /'reɪn tʃek/ *noun*, means that a matter will be discussed or decided later. It is usually combined with 'take', as in: 'I will have to take a rain check on this'. It is an informal AE term that is used a lot in business. The expression originated as the term for a new ticket issued for a rescheduled baseball or American football match stopped because of rain or other bad weather conditions. See **RAIN**.

### adverbs

- Adverbs are words that add something to a verb, an adjective, or a whole sentence, but never a noun. Many adverbs of manner end in *-ly*, such as *quickly, proudly*, but other adverbs, like *here* and *now*, do not. Some phrases where adverbs without *-ly* are preferred are: *sell cheap, run fast* and *play fair*. See **LINK WORDS**.
- It is best to avoid a string of *-ly* adverbs together. NOT: 'The email was really exceedingly badly written'. USE: *It is clear that the email was very badly written*.

- Do not use hyphens after *-ly* adverbs, because they have no purpose. NOT 'He is an equally-good man'. USE *He is an equally good man*. See **HYPHENATION IN COMPOUNDS**.

- A useful rule to remember is that when more than one adverb or adverbial phrase is used in a sentence, they tend to come in the order 'manner', 'place', and 'time', which coincidentally is the alphabetical order of these three words ('m', 'p', 't'): *He walked quickly* (manner) *down the street* (place); *I'll meet you in the market place* (place) *at five o'clock* (time); *The wind blew violently* (manner) *all night* (time).

### ADVERSE, AVERSE

**adverse** /'ædvɜːs/ *adjective*, means unfavourable, or harmful: 'The weather report warned us of adverse weather conditions'. 'Adverse' is not used about people.

**averse** /ə'vɜːs/ *adjective*, means opposing or having a strong dislike for a thing or person. 'Averse' is combined with 'to', and normally follows the verbs 'be' or 'feel': 'She was averse to men with beards'.

### ADVICE, ADVISE

**advice** /əd'vaɪs/ *noun*, means a recommended course of action. It is an uncountable noun, and therefore 'a piece of advice' or 'some advice' are often used to express amounts of advice. It always takes a singular verb and determiner: 'This advice is very important, and it should be followed carefully'. Note that 'advice' is replaced by a singular pronoun. The ending rhymes with 'ice'.

**advise** /əd'vaɪz/ *verb*, means to make recommendations: 'The policeman put his notebook away and advised us to keep to the speed limit'. The ending rhymes with 'eyes'.

### AERIAL, SPATIAL

**aerial** /'eəriəl/ *adjective & noun*, means something in the air or involving the use of aircraft, such as 'aerial surveillance'. As a noun in BE, an aerial is a wire that can transmit or receive radio waves. See **ANTENNA**.

**spatial** /'speɪʃl/ *adjective*, means relating to space and the position and shape of things in it: 'His spatial awareness was not very good, and he was always bumping into things'.

**AFTERWARDS, SUBSEQUENTLY**

**afterwards** /'ɑ:ftəwɔ:dz/ *adverb*, means later or after something that has been mentioned: 'The car hit a tree and the driver said he was very shaken up afterwards'. This is the normal BE spelling. 'Afterward' /'ɑ:ftəwəd/ is the AE alternative.

**subsequently** /'sʌbsɪkwəntli/ *adverb*, can mean the same as 'afterwards', but may refer to something that happens much later: 'He recovered from his injuries, but subsequently the doctors discovered symptoms of whiplash'. This is a formal word.

**AGE, AGED, ELDERLY**

**age** /eɪdʒ/ *noun & verb*, as a noun, means the duration of a life: 'He lived happily to a great age'. When capitalized, it can also refer to a period in history: 'The Elizabethan Age will be remembered for its poets and playwrights'. As a verb, 'age' refers to people or things becoming older: 'Because of regular exercise, the couple were aging more slowly than other pensioners'. The present participle is spelt 'aging' in AE and BE, and may also be spelt 'ageing' in BE.

**aged** /eɪdʒd/ *verb & adjective*, /'eɪdʒɪd/ *noun*, as the past tense of the verb 'age', refers to people getting older: 'The health service was expanded as a large percentage of the population aged'. It also refers to things developing in flavour over time: 'The brandy was aged in special casks'. As an adjective, 'aged' expresses how old a person is: 'The children in the class were aged between 8 and 10'. Note that as a verb or adjective, 'aged' is pronounced as one syllable. As a noun, this means old people collectively: 'They gave away their savings to help the aged'. The noun 'aged' is used with the definite article and is pronounced as two syllables. See **OLD**.

**elderly** /'eldəli/ *adjective & noun*, as an adjective refers to people who are old: 'Elderly people in the town were looked after very well'. This is a more polite term than calling people 'old'. As a noun, 'elderly' is used with the definite article: 'The elderly were allowed free taxis to the hospital and back'. See **ELDER/ELDEST**.

**AGGRAVATE, EXACERBATE, ANNOY**

**aggravate** /'ægrəveɪt/ *verb*, means to make a situation worse; for instance, by scratching an open wound, or by saying something to make someone more angry than they already were: 'The press comment seriously aggravated the problems of the socialist party'.

**exacerbate** /ɪg'zæsəbeɪt/ *verb*, means 'aggravate', but is used for situations, diseases or problems: 'Unfortunately her reaction to the story in the press only exacerbated the situation'. This is a formal word.

**annoy** /ə'noɪ/ *verb*, means to make a person angry. 'Aggravate' is often used in this sense, but careful writers still distinguish between aggravating a situation, and annoying a person.

**AGO, SINCE, FOR**

**ago** /ə'ɡəʊ/ *adverb*, always refers to a specific time in the past, whether five minutes ago or two thousand years ago: 'The Romans were using central heating two thousand years ago'. When a clause is introduced by 'ago', add 'that', not 'since': 'It was nearly 450 years ago that Shakespeare was born'. Note that it is incorrect to combine 'for' and 'ago' in the same phrase. It is also incorrect to use present perfect tenses before 'ago'.

**since** /sɪnz/ *preposition & conjunction*, refers to a continuous period between the time considered and the present: 'It is nearly 450 years since Shakespeare was born'. As 'ago' refers to the past, and 'since' refers to the present, never combine the two time expressions in the same clause.

**for** /fɔːr, fɔːr/ *preposition*, refers to a continuous period of time which may or may not still be going on, depending on which verb tense is used in the main clause: 'He was president for eight years until 1980'. The strong form /fɔːr/ is only used when 'for' is the final word of a sentence.

**AGREE, APPROVE, CONSENT, ACCEDE**

**agree** /ə'ɡriː/ *verb*, means to have the same opinion as another person: 'We agreed that it would be a good idea to write a book'. To 'agree with' a person or idea means to support a theory or point of view: 'I agree with the principles underlying freedom of speech'. In a grammatical sense, to 'agree with' means to be consistent: 'You should always check that the verb agrees with its subject'. Figuratively, if food does not 'agree with' a person, it makes them ill. To 'agree to' something means to accept a suggestion made by somebody else: 'They agreed to the new pension plan'.

**approve** /ə'pruːv/ *verb*, means to accept someone else's proposal or actions as being satisfactory: 'He approved the publication plan'. To 'approve of' means to like or be pleased

with someone else's plans or actions: 'They thoroughly approved of their daughter's choice of husband'. The phrase 'approved by' refers to the body that accepts a proposal or plan: 'The budget cuts were approved by the board'.

**consent** /kən'sent/ *noun & verb* means permission or agreement to do something: 'Children need their parents' consent to buy goods by mail order'. As a verb, 'consent' is combined with 'to' when followed by a noun or verb: 'She consented to be my wife'. A less formal alternative is 'agree to'.

**accede** /ək'si:ɪd/ *verb*, means to agree or consent to something: 'The government was reluctant to accede to the union's demands'. This is a very formal word: 'agree' and 'consent' are less formal alternatives.

### AGREEMENT, AGRÉMENT, GENTLEMAN'S

**AGREEMENT, ARRANGEMENT, DEAL**  
**agreement** /ə'gri:mənt/ *noun*, means a negotiated and legally binding arrangement between two or more parties. An agreement can be written or oral: 'An agreement was reached between the three computer companies'. See **TREATY**.

**agrément** /'ægreimã/ *noun*, borrowed from French, is found on a product's label to show that it has been approved by the relevant EU authority. Hence its meaning in English is 'approval'.

**gentleman's agreement** /'dʒentlmənz ə'gri:mənt/ *noun*, means an unwritten, but binding agreement, based on trust and usually confirmed by a handshake. This may also be called a 'gentlemen's agreement'. An alternative term is a 'verbal agreement'.

**arrangement** /ə'reɪndʒmənt/ *noun*, means a practical agreement on a personal or commercial basis: 'The travel agents have an arrangement with several hotels in Rome'. It can also mean an agreement to settle a debt: 'They eventually came to an arrangement with the creditors'.

**deal** /di:l/ *noun*, means an agreement of any type. It is an informal word that refers either to a commercial transaction: 'That car was a really good deal'; or to a compromise: 'The government refuses to make any deals with terrorists'.

*A well-known rally driver is reported as saying: 'For many years, Ford and I have had a gentleman's agreement - in writing of course.'*

### agreement between subject and verb

In most cases, it is clear that a singular subject must be followed by a singular verb, and a plural subject by a plural verb. However, there are some exceptions to this general rule, outlined below, which are dealt with in more detail under the specific entries in this book.

- Uncountable nouns are always singular, but cannot be preceded by 'a/an': *advice, bread, damage, information, transport, wheat*. They have no plural form, and are always followed by a singular verb. See **UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS**.
- Academic subjects ending in *-ics* are singular: *linguistics, mathematics, physics*. These are followed by a singular verb. See **-ICS**.
- Some nouns ending in *-s* are singular. One such group refers to diseases, such as *measles* and *mumps*. Another such group refers to games, such as *billiards, draughts* (AE *checkers*), and *dominoes*. There are a few other words that follow this pattern, including *crossroads, means, and news*. These are all followed by a singular verb.
- Some nouns ending in *-s* are plural, but have no singular: *antics, oats*. These are followed by a plural verb. See **PLURAL NOUNS**.
- Some nouns are plural, even though they do not end in *-s*, and must take a plural verb. Examples are: *cattle, clergy, gentry, people, police*. These words have no singular form.
- Pairs of things are plural: *binoculars, scales, scissors, trousers*. These are followed by a plural verb but if the phrase 'a pair of' is used in front, they are followed by a singular verb.
- Collective nouns may be either singular or plural in BE, but are always singular in AE. Examples are: *company, family, team*. See **COLLECTIVE NOUNS**.
- Two singular nouns joined by *and* take a plural verb except when they have become a fixed phrase: *John and David are brothers*, but *fish and chips is a good meal*.

**AID<sup>S</sup>, AIDE<sup>S</sup>, AIDS, SUPPORT**

**aid** /eɪd/ *noun*, means financial assistance, often at government level: 'Considerable aid is always necessary for orphans in war zones'. 'Aid agencies' distribute food, shelter and financial help to regions in need. 'Aid' is an uncountable noun.

**aide** /eɪd/ *noun*, means an assistant in the armed forces, government and diplomatic corps: 'The aide to the President held a press conference'.

**Aids** /eɪdz/ *noun*, is the acronym for acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Although it ends in '-s', 'Aids' always takes a singular verb. An alternative spelling is AIDS.

**support** /sə'pɔ:t/ *noun*, means practical assistance such as the 'customer support' or 'technical support' provided for computer software users: 'Customer support is included in the price of this PC package'. It can also refer to help provided by sympathetic individuals: 'She was pleased to have the support of her colleagues when she applied for promotion'. This is an uncountable noun.

**AIR-, AERO-**

**air-** /eə-/ is the prefix used in most of the words connected with aviation in BE and AE, such as 'aircraft' and 'airborne'.

**aero-** /eərəʊ-/ is the prefix used in a few words connected with aviation, such as 'aeroplane' (BE) and 'aerospace'.

**AIRCRAFT, AEROPLANE**

**aircraft** /'eɪkrɑ:ft/ *noun*, means a powered flying vehicle. This includes aeroplanes and helicopters. It is often used in BE as an alternative for 'aeroplane'. Note that in BE, 'aircraft' is used for both the singular and plural forms: 'One aircraft was landing and six aircraft were on the runway'. In AE, it is the plural of 'airplane'.

**aeroplane** /'eərəpleɪn/ *noun*, is the usual BE form for a powered flying vehicle with fixed wings. The short form is 'plane'. 'Airplane' /'eəpleɪn/ is the AE form.

**ALL<sup>S</sup>, AL-<sup>S</sup>**

**all** words are written in two words like 'all ready', 'all right', and 'all together', or with a hyphen like 'all-important' or 'all-inclusive'. Note that both words carry meaning, as in: 'Are you all ready to go?' Remember to keep the double 'l'.

**al-** words are written in one word like 'already', 'alright', and 'altogether'. Note that these words do not have the same meaning as 'all' words: 'She has already gone'. 'Al-' words only have a single 'l'.

**ALLOCATE, ALLOT**

**allocate** /'æləkeɪt/ *verb*, means to share or divide resources for a particular purpose: 'The university allocates most of its spare resources to Computer Science students'.

**allot** /ə'lɒt/ *verb*, means to assign as a whole without the idea of distribution: 'The European Commission allotted a further €50 million to medical research'.

**ALLOW, LET, PERMIT**

**allow** /ə'laʊ/ *verb*, means to accept a form of behaviour or course of action: 'Some schools allow pupils to wear their own clothes instead of a uniform'.

**let** /let/ *verb*, means the same as 'allow', but is a more informal word: 'My parents won't let me do anything'. 'Let' also means to rent out a property. See **RENT**.

**permit** /pə'mɪt/ *verb*, is a more formal alternative to 'allow', and is commonly used in the passive: 'Talking during the exam is not permitted'. Note that the second syllable is stressed.

**permit** /'pɜ:mɪt/ *noun*, means an official authorization to do something, often in the form of a written document: 'He was fortunate to be given a permit to watch the band rehearse before their concert'. Note that the first syllable is stressed.

**ALL RIGHT<sup>S</sup>, ALRIGHT<sup>S</sup>**

**all right** /'ɔ:l 'raɪt/ *adjective & adverb*, means that everything referred to is correct: 'These answers are all right'. Make certain that both words are stressed.

**alright** /ɔ:l'raɪt/ *adjective & adverb*, means satisfactory but not excellent: 'The test result was alright'. Some guides to English consider that 'alright' is an informal spelling and is to be avoided. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* states that the spelling 'alright' is acceptable, as it is similar to 'altogether' and 'already'. Nevertheless, many people consider it to be unacceptable in formal writing.