

A DICTIONARY OF
AMERICAN - ENGLISH
USAGE

BASED ON *Fowler's* MODERN ENGLISH USAGE

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PREFACE

'It is perhaps, then, rather a duty than a piece of presumption for those who have had experience in word-judging to take any opportunity . . . of helping things on by irresponsible expressions of opinion.'

MEU: NEEDLESS VARIANTS

A Dictionary of Modern English Usage, by H. W. Fowler, was first published in 1926. Its author, ex-schoolmaster, classicist, and lexicographer, had started work on it, in collaboration with his brother, in 1911. The First World War intervened, and in 1918 Francis George Fowler died; H. W. Fowler completed the project alone. Today 'MEU' remains one of the most loved, and most provocative, reference books, as indispensable as a dictionary, in America as well as in England. Fowler not only teaches you how to write; he is a demon on your shoulder, teaching you how not to write, pointing out and exhibiting, with terrifying clarity, your most cherished foibles: Love of the Long Word, Elegant Variation, Genteelism, Pedantry, Battered Ornaments. To tamper with Fowler has taken both humility and courage—or perhaps foolhardiness—born of the quotation given above.

New words and idioms have come into the language since the publication of *Modern English Usage*; there are peculiarities of American speech and writing not recorded by Fowler; and many of us today, English and American, have neither the time nor the scholarship to follow through the fascinating but sometimes exasperating labyrinth of Greek and Latin parallels and Fowler's Socratic method of teaching by wrong examples. *American-English Usage* is an adaptation of MEU, not a replacement. AEU is a simplified MEU, with American variations, retaining as much of the original as space allowed. Many of the longer articles had to be shortened, many of the more academic ones and those less pertinent to usage today were omitted, to make room for new entries and illustrations. Fowler's own mannerisms and pedantries—and I am sure he would have been the last to deny them—have been left untouched. There was a temptation sometimes to soften the sting of 'illiterate,' 'journalese,' 'lady novelists,' 'uneducated writers'; perhaps Fowler himself would have tempered some of them had he revised his book, but only Fowler could decide that. They have been left as he wrote them.

It would be impossible to list the names of the many people whom I have consulted about the new material—specialists, friends, even casual acquaintances who have allowed me to interpose discussions of British and American usage at the most inappropriate times; I thank them for their help and their patience. I am deeply grateful to the Clarendon Press, England, and to Oxford University Press, New York, for allowing me to undertake this work in the first place, and to the staff of Oxford, New York, for its help and encouragement during the time the book was going through the press. I want to thank specifically Mr. R. W. Chapman, lately Secretary to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, for his painstaking work in reading the first draft of the manuscript and for his many comments and suggestions, made with the wisdom and delicacy of wit that characterizes MEU. I also want to thank Mr. Henry Z. Walck of Oxford, New York, for his part in the conception of the project and for his continuing faith that brought it to a completion. Any errors and pitfalls that I have not avoided are my own.

A NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION: I have made no attempt to indicate general differences in English and American pronunciation—for example, the differences in pronouncing broad *a*, final *e*, short *o*, and the hard or slurred *r*—differences of this kind obtain within the United States itself, and also in different sections of the United Kingdom. Fowler says 'Pronounce as your neighbors do'; some of us on this side of the Atlantic could wish when we hear Englishmen and Americans speaking side by side—statesmen perhaps, or commentators or entertainers—that our neighbors would articulate a little more precisely, that *manufacture* were not pronounced as if it were spelled *mana-*, or that they recognized some difference in the value of the *a* in *cat*, *path*, and *laugh*; but that is not a matter for this book. The differences in English and American pronunciation that are given are not to express preference or censure, but to give the accepted pronunciation of each country.

If I could dedicate this book, and if it were not impertinent in the circumstances to think of doing so, I should dedicate it to the memory of Henry Watson Fowler, born 1858, died 1933. Since I must not, my hope is that AEU will be an instrument to lead some of the new generation who have not yet discovered it to the joys of *Modern English Usage*.

M. N.

Hillsdale, New York
29 July 1956

ABBREVIATIONS

ACD, *American College Dictionary*
 Cent. Dict. & Cyclo., *Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia*
 COD, *Concise Oxford Dictionary*
 D.N.B., *Dictionary of National Biography*
 Ency. Brit., *Encyclopedia Britannica*
 Mencken, *The American Language*
 MEU, *Modern English Usage* (Fowler)
 Sat. Rev., *Saturday Review (of Literature)*
 Webster, *Webster's New International Dictionary* (Abridged; Unabridged)

abbr., abbreviate, -ation	facet., facetious(ly) F., Fr., French, France	opp., opposite, op- posed to
abs., absolute	fem., feminine, fe- male	orig., origin(ally)
adj., adjective, -ally	fig., figurative(ly)	O.T., Old Testament
adv., adverb(ial)	fr., from	part., participle, -ipial
Antiq., Antiquity	gen., general(ly)	pers., person
Arch., Architecture	Ger., German(y)	pl., plural
attrib., attributive(ly)	Gr., Greek	Poet., Poetry, Poetics
Bot., Botany	gram., grammar	poss., possessive
Brit., British (us- age), Great Britain	Hist., History, -orical	p.p., past participle
c., century	Hort., Horticulture	pref., prefer(ably), -red
c., circum	indic., indicative	prep., preposition
cap., capital(ize)	ind. obj., indirect object	pron., pronounce(d); pronoun
Chin., Chinese	inf., infinitive	prop., proper(ly)
colloq., colloquial (ly), -ism	It., Italy, -ian	R.C., Roman Catho- lic(s), -ism
conj., conjunction	L., Lat., Latin	rel., relative
constr., construe, -uction	lit., literal(ly); lit- erature, -ary	Rhet., Rhetoric
d., died	Log., Logic	sing., singular
derog., derogatory, -ially	m., masculine	Sp., Spain, Spanish
dial., dialect(al)	Med. Medicine	spec., specific(ally)
dim., diminutive	med. Lat., medieval Latin	subj., subjunctive; subject
Eccl., Ecclesiastical	Mil., Military	syn., synonym(ous)
ellip., elliptical	mod., modern	trans., transitive
Eng., England, Eng- lish	MS., MSS., manu- script(s)	transf., transferred (senses)
erron., erroneous (ly)	Mus., Music	unnec., unnecessary
esp., especial(ly)	n., nn., noun(s)	v., vv., verb(s)
est., established (us- age)	Naut., Nautical	var., variant
etym., etymology, -ically	Nav., Naval	vulg., vulgar(ly), -ism
exc., except	N.T., New Testa- ment	&, and
	obj., object(ive)	&c., et cetera
	obs., obsolete	

Words in small capitals (e.g. GENTEELISM) refer to the article of that name (or e.g. WRONG to a usage not recommended).

KEY TO PRONUNCIATION

Pronunciation is given only for words that are unfamiliar or are often mispronounced. If only one syllable or the stress is in question, the other syllables may not be marked or may be omitted. For the pronunciation of FRENCH WORDS, see that article; of Latin words, see LATIN PRONUNCIATION. See also the article PRONUNCIATION, and the Note on pronunciation in the Preface.

VOWELS

a: mâte, räck, stigma, fäther, dânce, mâre, châotic

e: mête, rëck, silent, dépend, makër

i: mîte, rick, cousin

o: môte, röck, contain, fôrbear, tôbacco

u: mûte, rüch, submit, ûrn, ûnited, ü (as Fr. *eu* in *coiffeur*)

ah: bah; aw: law; ōō: mōōt; ōō: rōōk; oi: noise; ow: cow; ou: bough

CONSONANTS USED IN RE-SPELLING

g (hard) as in *get*

h (aspirate) as in *hat*

j (soft g) as in *just*, *gest*

k (hard c) as in *kid*, *cat*

ng as in *singer*

ngg as in *finger*

y as in *yes*

s (sibilant, soft c) as in *said*, *city*

z (soft or voiced s) as in *fiz*, *music*

zh (g, s, z) as in *rouge*, *fusion*, *azure*

LIST OF GENERAL ARTICLES

a, an	Compound Prepositions, &c.	ever
-able, -ible	Conjunction	everyone
Absolute Construction	connection	ex-
Absolute Possessives	course	excepting
Adverbs	Curtailed Words	Exclamation Mark
Æ, Œ	Dangling Participle	-ex, -ix
-æ, -as	dare	-ey & -y in adjectives
-al nouns	Dash	-ey, -ie, -y in diminutives
Americanisms	-d-, -dd-	Facetious Formations
Analogy	Diarsis	fact
and	Didacticism	fail
Anti-Saxonisms	different	False Emphasis
any	Differentiation	far
Apostrophe	disjunctive	fellow & hyphens
Archaism	do	Feminine Designations
are, is,	Double Case	Fetishes
as	Double Construction	few
Avoidance of the Obvious	Double Passives	-fied
Back Formation	doubt(ful)	field (& synonyms)
Barbarisms	dry	first
be	due	follow
because	each	for
between	easterly, northerly, &c.	for-, fore-
bi-	-ection, -xion	Foreign Danger
both	either	Formal Words
but	Elegant Variation	French Words
by, bye, by-	Ellipsis	Friday, &c.
Cannibalism	else	-ful
case	Emphasis	Fused Participle
Cases	-en adjectives	Gallicisms
Cast-Iron Idiom	England, Englishman	Generic Names, &c.
-c-, -ck-	enough & sufficient (ly)	Genteelism
-ce, -cy	Enumeration Forms	Gerund
character	-en verbs from adjectives	-g-, -gg-
-ciation	equally as	god-
claim	-er & -est, more & most	Grammar, Syntax, &c.
cliché	-er & -or	grand- compounds
co-	etc.	Hackneyed Phrases
Collectives	even	had
Colon		half
Comma		
Complement		

hardly	Jingles	nature
hart, stag, buck, &c.	jocose, jocular, &c.	need
have	just	Needless Variants
Haziness	lady	Negative & Affirma-
he	lampoon, libel, skit,	tive Clauses
Hebrew, Israelite,	&c.	neither
&c.	last	neo-
help	late, ex-, formerly,	-n- & -nn-
his	&c.	next
homonym, synonym	Latin Plurals	no
Hon.	Latin Pronunciation	nom de guerre, pen-
hope	latter	name, &c.
however	lay & lie	nominative
humor, wit, &c.	Legerdemain with	non-
hyphens	Two Senses	none
-i	less	nor
-ical	-less	not
-ics	lest	nothing less than
Idiom	liable	Noun & Adjective
ie, ei	libel & synonyms	Accent
i.e., id est	like	Noun & Verb Accent
if & when	-like	Novelese
Illiteracies	likely	Novelty-Hunting
Illogicalities	-lily	Number
in- & un-	literally	Object Shuffling
inasmuch as	Literary Critics'	œ, æ, e
Incompatibles	Words	-o(e)s
Incongruous Vocab-	Literary Words	of
ulary	-lived	Officialese
Indirect Object	-ll-, -l-	often
Indirect Question	Long Variants	-on
Infinitive	lord	once
-ing	Love of the Long	one
-ing prepositions	Word	only
in order that	lū	onto, on to, on
in so far	-ly	or
instance	Malaprops	-or
inter-	Mannerisms	other
in that	me	otherwise
into, in to	-ment	ought
Inversion	Metaphor	our
-ion & -ness	-meter	-our & -or
irony	million	Out of the Frying
Irrelevant Allusion	Misquotation	Pan
is	-m-, -mm-	Overzeal
-ise, -ize	molecule, atom, &c.	Pairs & Snares
-ism & -ity	more	Parallel-Sentence
-ist, -alist, &c.	M.P. (G.I., U.N.,	Dangers
it	&c.)	Parenthesis
italic	much	Participles
-ize, -ise	Muses	Passive Disturbances
argon, &c.	Mute e	Pedantic Humor

Pedantry	's	therefore
Perfect Infinitive	said	they, them, their
period	sake	those
Periphrasis	same	though
Person	save	thus
Personification	Saxonism	time (& synonyms)
Pleonasm	saying	-tion & other -ion
point	scarcely	endings
Polysyllabic Humor	scilicet	to
Pomposities	seem	too
Popularized Technicalities	self-	Trailers
Position of Adverbs	Semantics	Transitive Verb
Positive Words in Neutral Places	semi-	True and False
Possessive Puzzles	Semicolon	Etymology
possible	Sentence	-t- & -tt-
pre-	Sequence of Tenses	-ty & -ness
prefer(able)	seq., seqq., et seq(q)	type, prototype, antitype
Preposition at End	shall & will	û
present	sic	-um
Pride of Knowledge	Side-Slip	un-
probable	sign (& synonyms)	Unattached Principles
Pronouns	Simile & Metaphor	Unequal Yokefellows
Pronunciation	'S Incongruous	Unidiomatic -ly
provided(that)	Singular -s	unique
psychopathic, psychotic, &c.	Slipshod Extension	unless & until
Purism	so	unthinkable
Quasi-Adverbs	sobriquets	upon, on
question	some	us
Question Mark	-some	-us
quite	Spelling Points	use
Quotation	Split Infinitive	value
Quotation Marks	Split Verbs	various
rather	-s-, -ss-	-ved, -ves
re(-)	stem	very
Recessive Accent	Stock Pathos	view
regard	Sturdy Indefensibles	viz., sc(il)., i.e.
relation(ship)	Subjunctives	Vogue Words
Repetition of Words or Sounds	such	Vulgarization
resort, resource, recourse	Superfluous Words	Walled-up Object
respective(ly)	Superiority	Wardour Street
reverend, rev., &c.	Superlatives	English
Revivals	Superstition	-wards
Rhyme	Swapping Horses	we
Rhythm	Synonyms	well
right	-t & -ed	what
root	Tautology	what ever, whatever
-r-, -rr-	tenses	where- compounds
	than	whether
	that	
	the	
	there	
	therefor	

which	will, v.	worth-while
which, that, who	-wise & -ways	-x
which with <i>and</i> or	without	-xion
<i>but</i>	Word Patronage	-y
while, whilst	Working and Stylish	y & i
who & whom	Words	yet
whoever	Worn-Out Humor	zodiac
whose	worth, worth while	-z- & -zz-

N.B. *Webster's New International Dictionary* (Webster) and *The American College Dictionary* (ACD) have been cited in the text not because they are necessarily recommended as the best of the many available American dictionaries, but because they best reflect the contrast between traditional American spelling, pronunciation, and usage on the one hand and the modern, more liberal usage on the other.

A DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN-ENGLISH USAGE

a, an. 1. A is used before all consonants except silent *h* (*a history, an hour*). An was formerly the rule before an unaccented syllable beginning with *h* (*an habitual topic of conversation, an historical novel, an hotel*); the first two are still widely used in speech, less widely in writing. Since the *h* is now pronounced, *an* is usually nostalgic or pedantic.

2. The combinations of *a* with *few* & *many* are a matter of arbitrary but established usage: *a few, a great many, a good many* are idiomatic, but *a good few* is now facetious or colloq.; *a very few* is permissible but *an extremely few* is not; see **FEW**.

3. *A, an*, follow the adjectives *many, such, & what* (*many an artist, such a task, what an infernal bore!*); they also follow any adjective preceded by *as* or *how* (*I am as good a man as he; I knew how great a labor he had undertaken*), & usually any adjective preceded by *so* (*so resolute an attempt; a so resolute attempt* is also English, but suggests affectation); they often follow any adjective preceded by *too* (*too exact an, or a too exact, adherence to instructions*). The late position should not be adopted with other words than *as, how, so, too*. NOT: *which was quite sufficient an indication./Can anyone choose more glorious an exit?/Have before them more brilliant a future*; the normal order (*a quite or quite a sufficient, a more glorious, a far more brilliant*) is also the right one.

4. *A, an*, are sometimes ungrammatically inserted, especially after *no* (adj.), to do over

again work that has already been done; NOT *No more signal a defeat was ever inflicted*; *no* = not *a*, & the *a* before *defeat* must be omitted; NOT *The defendant was no other a person than Mr. Disraeli, but no other person than . . .*

5. *A+(noun)+or two* takes a plural verb: *a year or two are needed for research; but a year or so is needed*.

abbreviate makes *abbreviable*.

abdomen. Traditionally pron. äbdō'men; US dictionaries recognize äb'dōmen also, but the former is here recommended.

abettor, -or. The *-or* ending always in legal contexts & more usual in others.

abide. Formerly, *abide, abode, abidden*; now usually *abided*, or (rarely US) *abode* for past & p.p. (*abidden* rare or poetic). *He abided (or has abided) by the terms of the contract*. In the sense 'tolerate,' 'put up with,' in use since the 16th c. but now heard only in the negative: *I can't or can scarcely abide it*.

abject. Pron. ab'-. For *my abject apologies*, see **HACKNEYED PHRASES**.

abjection, abjectness. There is little differentiation between the two, but the first is perhaps more usual for the condition, the second for the state of mind. *The women of Europe have never sunk to the abjection of the women of the East./He could look to God without abjectness, and on man without contempt*.

abjure, adjure. *Abjure* means to renounce an oath, forswear,

repudiate: *abjure allegiance*, *abjure a former belief*. *Adjure* means to command solemnly, to appeal to or entreat (someone) earnestly, as if under oath: *I adjured him to stand on the truth*. *Adjure* is always followed by an infinitive or by a substantive clause.

-able, -ible, &c. The suffix *-able* is a living one & may be appended to any transitive verb to make an adjective. If the verb ends in a silent *e*, this is dropped except after a soft *c* or *g* (*usable*, *likable*, *pronounceable*, *manageable*).

Verbs ending in *-ate* that have established adjectives drop the *-ate* (*demonstrable*, *abominable*, &c.) & new adjs. should be similarly formed except when the verb is of two syllables (*accumulate* makes *accumulable*, *adulterate*, *adulterable*, but *dictate*, *dictatable*, *locate*, *locatable*). Nonce adjectives in *-able* may be formed even from those verbs whose established representatives are in *-ible* &c., especially when the established word has to some extent lost the verbal or contracted a special sense. Thus a mistake may be called *uncorrectable*, because *incorrigible* has become ethical in sense; *solvable* may be preferred because *soluble* has entered into an alliance with *dissolve*; & *destrorable* by *dynamite* may seem less pedantic than *destructible* by. The principle is that the normal form *-able* should be used when there is no objection to it. There is an objection when a word is itself well established with *-ible* &c. in general use, & therefore *digestible*, *perceivable*, are not to be substituted for *digestible* & *perceptible*. There is also an objection, though a less forcible one, when,

though the word itself is not established in the *-ible* form, it is one of a set that includes an established word in *-ible*. Thus *incontrovertible* & *convertible* should decide the form *avertible*, *divertible*, *pervertible*, &c.; *digestible*, that of *suggestible*; in favor of *adducible*, *educible*, *producible*, &c., there is added to the influence of (*ir*)*reducible* & *deducible* a legitimate dislike to the ugly forms in *-eable*.

aboard. Originally on board, or into or onto a ship, & still sometimes so restricted in England; but generally it is now used also of trains & even busses and planes.

abolishment, abolition. There is no real difference in meaning & *abolishment* should not be used without careful consideration. If *abolition* is not wanted, *abolishing* (n.) will usually do.

A-bomb, atomic bomb, atom bomb. All three forms are used; the second is the original & is better in formal writing.

aborigines. The word being still pronounced with a consciousness that it is Latin (i.e. with *ēz*), the (etymologically unjustifiable) sing. *aborigine* (-*nē*), though gaining in popularity even among scholars, is still avoided or disliked by many; the adj. *aboriginal* used as a noun is the best singular.

about. In the sense *almost* (*he is about frozen*) still colloq. *It is about* (i.e. *fig. in the vicinity of*) 9:30 is established idiom. (But *NOT it is about 9 or 10.*)

above. Adv.: *The heavens above*; *the above-mentioned article*; prep.: *situated above the peaks*; *authority above that of civil law*. Although modern usage sanctions *above* as adj. & noun also, the (elliptical?) use

(the above argument; the above is my conviction) is still avoided by careful writers. Recommended: *the foregoing argument, or the argument given above; the above-mentioned theory, the theory given above, &c.*

abridg(e)ment. The shorter form is preferred in the US & generally in Brit., although Oxford prefers the longer form. *Abridgeable* is given precedence in the US, whereas the OED lists *abridgable* first. A work is an *abridgment* of another, or *abridged* from another.

abrogate makes *-gable*.

absence. For *conspicuous by his absence* see HACKNEYED PHRASES.

absent, adj. & v. The accent of the adj. is on the first syllable, of the verb generally on the second. *Absent-minded, absent-mindedness*, so spelled.

absentee (n. & adj.) makes *absenteeism*.

absolute. (1) The use of *ab'solutely* for *very*, *absolute'ly* for *yes*, emphatic, are chiefly (US?) colloq. (2) For *In these pages they absolutely live*, see LITERALLY. (3) Grammar. An adj. or transitive verb is *absolute* when the adj. has no noun or the verb no object. *Fortune favors the brave; # looks could kill*.

absolute construction. Punctuation. *The king having read his speech, their majesties retired.* NOT *The king, having read &c.* The insertion of a comma between noun & participle in the absolute use is wrong. It arises from the writer's taking the noun, because it happens to stand first, for the subject of the main verb. Frequent use of the

absolute construction gives a heaviness of style; it is best used sparingly.

ABSOLUTE POSSESSIVES.

Under this term are included the words *hers, ours, theirs, & yours*, & (except in the archaic attributive-adjective use, as *thine eyes*) *mine & thine*. A mistake is often made when two or more possessives are to be referred to a single noun that follows the last of them. NOT *yours and ours and his efforts*; the correct forms are: *your & our & his efforts; either my or your informant must have lied* (NOT *mine*); *her & his mutual dislike* (NOT *hers*); *our without your help will not avail* (NOT *ours*). There is no doubt a natural temptation to substitute the wrong word; the simple possessive seems to pine at separation from its property. The true remedy is a change of order: *your efforts & ours & his; my informant or yours; our help without yours*. It is not always available, however; *her & his mutual dislike* must be left as it is.

absorbedly. Four syllables.

abstemious, abstinent. *Abstemious* (originally 'from wine') signifies habitual moderation in the gratification of appetite (particularly for wine & food). *Abstinent* (from *abstinence*, the refraining from gratification) may be of a single act or a general refraining from indulgence, *an abstinent enjoyment of life*.

abstract (adj.), **abstracted** (part. adj.). *Abstract* carries the significance of being withdrawn from material embodiment (as opposed to *concrete*); ideal, or abstruse, theoretical: *abstract reasoning, truth, speculations. Abstracted*, directly from the

verb, 'withdrawn, removed,' now has the meaning withdrawn from contemplation of present objects, absent in mind: *He was in an abstracted mood; an abstracted gaze.*

absurd. The *s* pronunciation is preferred (NOT abzurd).

abyssmal, abyssal. The first is the rhetorical word (*abyssmal ignorance, degradation, bathos*); *abyssal*, formerly used in the same way, has now been appropriated as a technical term meaning 'of the bottom of the ocean,' or of a depth greater than 300 fathoms.

a cappella. In chapel style, i.e. unaccompanied (of vocal music). So spelled; ital.

accent(uate). In fig. senses (draw attention to, emphasize, make conspicuous, &c.) the long form is now much the commoner; in literal senses (sound or write with an accent), though either will pass, the short prevails; & the DIFFERENTIATION is worth encouraging.

acceptance, acceptation. The words, once used indifferently in several senses, are now fully differentiated. *Acceptation* means only the interpretation put on something (*the word in its proper acceptation means 'love'; the various acceptations of the doctrine of the Trinity*), while *acceptance* does the ordinary work of a verbal noun for *accept* (*find acceptance*, be well received; *beg or ask one's acceptance of*, ask him to accept; cf. *ask his acceptance of the terms*=ask how he understands; *endorses my acceptance of the terms*, agrees with me in accepting them; cf. *endorses my acceptation of them*, agrees with my view of their drift).

accepter, -or. The first form is now generally used for one who accepts. The second (earlier) form is the legal term, one who accepts, or undertakes the payment of, a bill of exchange.

accept of. This, formerly used almost as widely as the simple verb, is now restricted to the meaning consent to receive as a gift or benefit or possession. We can still *accept of a gift or favor, of a person's love or company*, & the like, though even these phrases tend to become archaic. But a theory, an emendation, advice, an apology, an invitation, we only accept.

access, accession. There are probably, in modern usage, no contexts in which one of these can be substituted for the other without the meaning's being modified. With regard to arriving, *accession* means arrival, *access* opportunity of arriving; accordingly *accession to the throne* means becoming sovereign, *access to the throne* opportunity of petitioning the sovereign; we can say *His access to fortune was barred*, or *His accession to fortune had not yet taken place*, but not the converse. The idea of increase, often present in *accession*, is foreign to *access*; *an access of fury, fever, joy, despair, &c.*, is a fit or sudden attack of it, which may occur whatever the previous state of mind may have been, whereas *an accession of* any of them can only mean a heightened degree of the one that already existed; *our forces have had no accession*, have not been augmented in numbers, *have had no access*, have not been able to enter.

accessary, accessory. (Accent preferably -cess'ory.) Etymo-

logically *accessary* is the noun, *accessory* the adj., but present US usage favors the latter for both.

accidentally. So spelled. *Accidently*, also an early form, is now obs.

acclimatize, acclimate, &c. *Acclimatize, acclimatization*, are the forms for which Brit. general usage seems to have decided; *acclimate, acclimation*, are more general in US. Pron. *aklim'atiz*; both *aklīmāt* & *ak'limāt* are acceptable, but most US dictionaries give *aklīmāt* first.

accommodate, so spelled.

accompan(y)ist. The shorter form is now more prevalent in US, but either is permissible.

accord, account. The phrases are of *one's own accord*, *on one's own account*; NOT *of one's own account*. See CAST-IRON IDIOM.

according as means 'just as,' 'in a manner corresponding to the way in which.' Thus, *According as bodies become transparent they cease to be visible. According to means 'in a manner agreeing with. According to our ideas, this was the worst thing he could do. Accordingly as means according as, but is obsolescent. There is a tendency to repeat the phrase according as (like BETWEEN), with a mistaken idea of making the construction clearer, in contexts where the repetition is not merely needless but wrong. NOT The big production will be harmful or the reverse, according as it can command the Government to insure it a monopoly in all circumstances, or according as it works with the knowledge that, if it abuses its trust, the door is freely open to the competing products of other*

countries. The second according as it should be omitted. Or according as is legitimate only when what is to be introduced is not the necessarily implied alternative or the other extreme of the same scale, but another scale or pair of alternatives. RIGHT: Man attains happiness or not according as he deserves it or not. (NOT according as he deserves it or according as he does not deserve it); but (RIGHT) according as he deserves it or according as he can digest his food.

accouchement &c. An established euphemism (*confinement*, also a euphemism, at least has the virtue of being English). Pron. *ākoosh'mēnt* or as Fr.

account. Unlike *regard*, & like *consider*, this verb does not in good modern usage admit of *as* before its complement; *I account it a piece of good fortune (NOT as a piece); you are accounted wise or a wise man.*

accouter, accoutre. Pron. *ā kōō'ter*. US usually *accouter, -tered, -tering*; Brit. *-re, -tred, -tring*. So *accouterment* (pron. *-terment*) *accoutrement* (pron. *-trement*).

accumulate makes *-lable*.

accumulative. The word, formerly common in various senses, has now given place to *cumulative* in most of them, retaining in ordinary use only the sense 'given to accumulating property, acquisitive.'

accursed, accurst. The *-ed* spelling is more prevalent in the US, except in poetic use. Whatever the spelling, the pronunciation is usually *this accursed (ak ur'sed) hour; of all men accurst or accursed (akurst')*.

accusal. An old but unnecessary form; *accusation* has the same meaning & is the more usual word.

accuse. *Accuse a person of a thing; charge him with a thing.*

achieve implies successful effort. Its use as a FORMAL WORD for getting or reaching should be avoided, e.g. *on achieving manhood*.

acid test. From testing for (the presence of) gold; transf. test of the value, genuineness, of something. Overused and often misused. See POPULARIZED TECHNICALITIES.

acknowledg(e)ment. Standard US & Brit. usage supports the shorter form (COD prefers the longer). *Acknowledgeable* retains the *e*.

acoustic. Pronunciation varies between -ow- & oo; in US oo is preferred. The noun *acoustics*, the science of sound, is both sing. & pl., but is usually treated as sing.

acquaintanceship is a NEEDLESS VARIANT for acquaintance. See RELATIONSHIP.

acreage. So spelled.

acronym. A word formed from initial letters of a phrase or title; WAC, loran, NATO, Unesco.

act, v. In the sense 'behave like,' the word, once used as freely as *play*, has contracted a slangy or colloquial tone, & is now more appropriate in such expressions as *act the giddy goat* than in *act the philosopher, lover, child*, or even *fool*, in all of which *play* is better.

act, action. The distinction between the two words is not always clear. The natural idea that *act* should mean the thing done, & *action* the doing of it,

is not even historically quite true, but it has influence enough to prevent *act* from being commonly used in the more abstract senses. We can speak only of the action, not the act, of a machine, when we mean the way it acts; & *action* alone has the collective sense, as in *his action throughout* (i.e. his acts or actions as a whole) *was correct*; there are also other senses in which there is obviously no choice open. In contexts that do admit of doubt, it may be said generally that *action* tends to displace *act*. If we were making the phrases for the first time now, we should probably prefer *action* in *The Acts of the Apostles*, *By the act of God*, *Be great in act as you have been in thought*, *I deliver this as my act & deed*. This tendency, however, is by no means always effective; it is indifferent, for instance, whether we say we are *judged by our acts* or *by our actions*; there is no appreciable difference between *it was an act*, & *it was an action*, *that he was to regret bitterly*. And in certain contexts *act* more than holds its ground: (1) In the sense 'deed of the nature of: it would be an act (never action) of folly, cruelty, mercy, &c.; similarly in the sense 'deed characteristic of: it was the act (rarely action) of a fool (cf. *the actions of a fool cannot be foreseen*, where the sense is not characteristic deed, but simply deed). On the other hand, when for *of folly* or *of a fool* &c. *foolish* &c. is substituted, *action* is commoner than *act*—*a cruel, kind, foolish, noble, action* or *act*. (2) In the sense 'instant of doing': *caught in the act*, *was in the very act of jumping*. (3) In antithesis with *word*, *thought*,