

**MACMILLAN**  
**CONTEMPORARY**  
**DICTIONARY**



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# **MACMILLAN CONTEMPORARY DICTIONARY**

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# Introduction

The *Macmillan Contemporary Dictionary* is the best paperback dictionary available today. Based on the *Macmillan Dictionary*, compiled by the Macmillan Educational Corporation, it is an all-purpose dictionary made especially clear and complete for everyone. Its more than 90,000 main items (called entries) include more than 100,000 different definitions. Unlike most other paperback dictionaries, the *Macmillan Contemporary Dictionary* offers numerous illustrative sentences. There are also more than 2,000 synonym studies and over 19,000 etymologies (word origins). These features, along with 1,900 illustrations covering its 1,100 pages, put this dictionary in a league with the larger, more expensive hardcover lexicons—and make the *Macmillan Contemporary Dictionary* an excellent addition to a home, a school, or an office collection of handy, economical reference books.

The entries in the dictionary reflect current American usage. The first definition given under each entry is usually the most common one—reflecting the way the word is most frequently used. The sentences and phrases illustrating the definitions are written in the language of today, except when these examples include quotations from famous writers of the past—a special feature of this dictionary.

Language is always changing. Perhaps today more words and phrases are being added to American English than ever before. We have given special attention, therefore, both to words that have come into our language in recent years and to the new meanings that old words have acquired with the changes in society. Our language is rich in new idioms and scientific names and terms; we have included important new words or meanings to make this dictionary up-to-date and useful to the modern reader.

The synonym studies, which follow many of the main entries, will be particularly useful in helping you make selections among words that have essentially the same meaning. The usage notes in many entries, indicated by a ▲, also help you pick the right word or phrase for use in a particular situation. Scientific names of plants and animals are given as part of their definitions. The many detailed illustrations that make the *Macmillan Contemporary Dictionary* attractive as well as informative also frequently convey important definitions more clearly than do lengthy written explanations.

# Guide to the Dictionary

The *Macmillan Contemporary Dictionary* contains many different kinds of information to help you in your reading, writing, and speaking. In order to gain the greatest possible benefit from this book, you need to know just what information it contains, how this information is arranged, and how it can be put to use. The following sections present a step-by-step description of the various features of the book, following the order in which you will find these items when you look up a word. The *Macmillan Contemporary Dictionary* can be a highly valuable language tool.

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# How to Look Up a Word

## The Main Entry

The words defined in this dictionary are called main entries. These *main entries* are printed in **boldface type** and appear at the left-hand margin of each column, followed by a body of information.

## Alphabetical Order

Main entries are arranged alphabetically. The *Macmillan Contemporary Dictionary's* entries are all contained in a single list, so that you may locate the word you want as easily as possible. There are no separate sections for special kinds of words, such as names of persons and places. Entries are listed alphabetically letter by letter, whether they consist of a single word or of two or more different words.

<b>ice floe</b>	<b>pollster</b>
<b>ice hockey</b>	<b>poll tax</b>
<b>icehouse</b>	<b>pollutant</b>

A small number of entries do not follow this letter-by-letter pattern. Entries for famous people are placed alphabetically according to the person's last name; the first name is not considered in alphabetizing.

**mendacity**  
**Mendel, Gregor**  
**mendelevium**

Names of places are alphabetized by their specific proper name only, rather than by *Lake*, *Mount*, *Cape*, or any other such word that describes what they are. Thus you would find **Lake Superior** under the letter *s*, not the letter *L*.

<b>horn</b>	<b>rush hour</b>
<b>Horn, Cape</b>	<b>Rushmore, Mount</b>
<b>hornbeam</b>	<b>rusk</b>

## Guide Words

The two words that appear in large boldface type at the top of each outside column are called *guide words*. They indicate the alphabetical range of the words to be found on that particular page. They are placed on the outside of the page, so that you can see them easily as you leaf through the book. The first guide word shows the first main entry word that appears on the page, and the second guide word shows the last main entry on the page. For example, the word **forceps** can be found on the page whose guide words are **forced/foremast**.

## Homographs

Sometimes you may find that the main entry you are looking up is not really the word you want, even though it looks exactly like your word. That's because many words in English are *homographs*—they are spelled the same way as other words. A homograph



**Secondary Entries** is a word that has the same spelling as another word or words, but a different meaning and origin, such as **bass** meaning "a kind of fish" and **bass** meaning "male singing voice." In this dictionary, words that are homographs are entered separately, and they are identified by a small numeral after the main entry.

**kind**<sup>1</sup> . . . 1. gentle, considerate, and friendly in nature or behavior . . .

**kind**<sup>2</sup> . . . 1. class, sort, or grouping; variety; type . . .

Even if the word or phrase you are looking for does not appear as a main entry, it's still very likely that it is explained in the dictionary. Many words are included as *secondary entries*. Secondary entries are printed in **secondary boldface** type within the body of material following a main entry. They appear with the main entry to which they are most closely related. A detailed description of each of the different kinds of secondary entries is included in the section entitled **The Entry**.

## The Entry

All the information in the *Macmillan Contemporary Dictionary* is contained in, or relates to, various entries in the book. Now that you have learned how to locate the entry you want, this section will tell you exactly what you will find when you arrive at that entry.

### **Kinds of Main Entries**

Most of the main entries in this dictionary are single words, such as **water**, **energy**, **boutique**, **cassette**, **scofflaw**, and **nectarine**. But there are certain kinds of main entries that do not fall into this single-word group.

#### **A. Compound Entries**

A *compound entry* is a main entry that is made up of a combination of two or more words, rather than a single word. Each of the individual words in such a combination may have its own entry in the dictionary, but often the combination must also be included as a separate main entry. A compound entry is necessary whenever the meanings of the individual words in a phrase do not clearly explain the meaning of the phrase. For example, looking up the meanings of the words **blind** and **date** would not enable you to fully understand the informal expression "blind date," so there is a separate entry for **blind date**. The phrase **long house** has its own entry because it is the name of a certain type of American Indian dwelling, rather than a general term meaning "any house that is long." If a phrase can be clearly understood from the meanings of its individual words, as is the case with such combinations as **hand lotion**, **motor oil**, **baseball glove**, or **solar telescope**, it does not have its own separate entry. Even though such phrases occur quite frequently in the language, you can understand them by looking up the individual words and combining their meanings.

#### **B. Prefixes, Suffixes, and Combining Forms**

Prefixes, suffixes, and combining forms are not actually words, but they appear in the dictionary because they are very important in the formation of words. All of these forms are groups of letters. *Prefixes* appear at the beginning of a word, *suffixes* appear at the end, and *combining forms* may appear in either place. The word **postwar** is composed of the prefix **post-** plus the word **war**. The words **creation**, **creative**, and **creator** are formed by adding various suffixes to the word **create**. In this dictionary combining forms that

appear at the beginning of a word and prefixes are identified by a hyphen following the entry form.

**dia-** prefix 1. through; between; across . . .

**centi-** combining form 1. hundred . . .

Combining forms that appear at the end of a word and suffixes are identified by a hyphen preceding the entry form.

**-ative** suffix . . . 1. tending to . . .

**-cide**<sup>1</sup> combining form killing of . . .

Many of the new words formed in English are created by adding a prefix, suffix, or combining form to a word that already exists in the language. There is no limit to the number of possible new words that can be made in this way. So you may occasionally encounter certain formations of this type that do not appear in your dictionary. By using the information in the *Macmillan Contemporary Dictionary*, however, you can understand the meaning of words even when they are not actually defined in the book. Suppose you encountered the unfamiliar word **thermomotor** in your reading. **Thermomotor** does not appear in this dictionary, since it is a very rare term. But there is an entry for the combining form **thermo-**, which means "heat." If you take this information and combine it with your knowledge of the word **motor**, it is not hard to gain an understanding of **thermomotor**. The word means "an engine driven by heat."

## C. Abbreviations

This dictionary includes the abbreviations that occur frequently in writing. In general, only one form of a particular abbreviation is entered here, the form that is most commonly used. Abbreviations vary so widely in form that it would not be possible to record all the different ways a particular abbreviation may be written. The abbreviation given here for "direct current" is **DC**, but the forms **D.C.**, **d.c.**, **dc**, **d-c**, or **d.c.** might also occur.

## D. Geographical Entries

The names of countries, states, major cities, lakes, mountains, and the like are entered in the main entry list. Important statistics, such as the area and population figures, are listed under all geographical entries.

**O-kla-ho-ma** . . . state in the south-central United States. Capital, Oklahoma City. Area, 69,919 sq. mi. Pop. (1970), 2,559,253. Abbreviation **Okla.**

## E. Biographical Entries

The names of important persons are entered in the main entry list alphabetically according to the last name. Such biographical entries include the years of a person's birth and death, his or her nationality, and a phrase describing the person's occupation or main area of contribution.

**Dick-in-son, Emily** . . . 1830-86, U.S. poet.

## Dividing A Word Into Syllables

Entry words are divided into syllables by centered black dots.

**fer-men-ta-tion**  
**re-pu-di-ate**

These dots show where the word should be divided in writing or printing if it occurs at the end of a line and part of the word must be carried over to the next line. If you were using the word **fermentation** and had to write part of it on the next line, it could be broken after **fer-**, **fermen-**, or **fermenta-**, depending on how much space you had available at the

end of the first line. Not all main entry words are divided into syllables. The individual words of a compound entry are not broken into syllables if they have their own separate main entries. Thus the entry **second lieutenant** is not divided, since the entry **sec-ond** and the entry **lieu-ten-ant** show the proper division for these words. Words that are pronounced as one syllable, such as **length** or **schnapps**, should not be divided in writing. This dictionary shows all the syllables of a word, but sometimes in writing it is not proper to break a word at a syllable division. When a syllable of one letter begins or ends a word, it should not be separated from the rest of the word. Words such as **bus-y**, **e-lect**, and **a-wake** should not be divided in writing.

**Pronunciation** The pronunciation of a word is printed in roman type (the same kind of type this sentence is written in). It is enclosed in parentheses and follows immediately after the boldface spelling of the entry to which it applies.

**jeep** (jēp) . . .

Pronunciations are shown by a respelling of the entry word according to a special system of letter symbols. These symbols represent the sounds of American English. The system which the symbols follow is presented in a pronunciation key on page G26, along with common words that show how each symbol is sounded. A shorter version of this pronunciation key is printed at the bottom of each page of the dictionary itself. The syllables of the pronunciation are divided by a space. Some syllables of a word are spoken with more *stress*, or force, than others. A syllable that is stressed is followed by an accent mark. Primary, or strong, stress indicates a syllable spoken with a great degree of force, and is represented by a heavy mark ('). Secondary, or weak, stress indicates a syllable spoken with a lesser degree of force and is represented by a lighter mark (˘). Syllables that are spoken without any stress at all have no accent mark.

**cen-ten-ni-al** (sen ten' ē əl) . . .

**klep-to-ma-ni-a** (klep'tə mā'nē ə) . . .

The syllables of the pronunciation are not always the same as the syllables of the main entry word. The pronunciation syllables are divided according to the way the word is spoken, in order to make it easy for you to sound out the pronunciation given.

**Dar-win-ism** (där'wi niz'əm) . . .

**prac-ti-cal-ly** (prak'tik lē) . . .

You can see that **Darwinism** has three syllables in its written form, but four in its spoken form. **Practically** is just the opposite—it has four in its written form, and three in its spoken form. Just remember that the syllable division of the boldface main entry word applies only to the way the word is written. The syllables of the pronunciation apply to the way the word is spoken. Therefore, the two sets of syllables won't always agree.

You will often find that an entry has more than one pronunciation. The alternate pronunciations are set off from the first pronunciation by a comma.

**a-dult** (ə dult', ad'ult) . . .

Each pronunciation is given in complete form once, but often alternate pronunciations do not appear in full. When a part of an alternate pronunciation does not change from the first pronunciation, it may be omitted and replaced by a hyphen.

**ma-chet-e** (mə shet'e, -chet'ē) . . .

**shib-bo-leth** (shib' əlith, -leth') . . .

The hyphen indicates that you should apply the missing part of the first pronunciation in sounding the second pronunciation. In the case of **machete**, for example, the second pronunciation would be (mə chet'ē). Sometimes a pronunciation is preceded by an itali-

cized label. This label usually means that this pronunciation is not used for all the definitions of the word. It may apply to only one part of speech, or to only one definition, as indicated by the label.

**ap-prox-i-mate** (adj., ə prək'sə mīt; v., ə prək'sə māt') . . .  
**suite** (swēt; def. 2 also soōt) . . .

Any pronunciation that does not have a label of any kind applies to all the definitions of the word. Each one-word main entry is given a pronunciation, no matter how simple the word may be.

**big** (big) . . .  
**hut** (hut) . . .

However, some main entries that consist of more than one word are not followed by a pronunciation.

**theater of the absurd**, . . .

This means that the individual words of the compound entry are pronounced at their own separate entries. The dictionary has entries for the words **theater**, **of**, **the**, and **absurd**. The pronunciations given at those entries tell you how to pronounce the compound **theater of the absurd**. On the other hand, a word in a compound entry is given a pronunciation if it does not have a pronunciation anywhere else in the book.

**Do-ber-man pin-scher** (dō'bər mən pin'shər) . . .

Sometimes a word in a compound entry has the same pronunciation as a one-word entry, except for the addition of *-s*, *-ed*, *-ing*, or another such ending. In such cases no pronunciation is given for that word in the compound.

**sol-dier** (sōl'jər) . . .  
**Soldier's Medal**, U.S. military decoration . . .

A word in a compound entry is pronounced whenever there is some doubt as to its pronunciation, even if it does have its own main entry.

**lead<sup>1</sup>** (lēd)  
**lead<sup>2</sup>** (led)

**lead line** (led)

Because our language is spoken in different ways in different parts of the United States, many words have more than one acceptable pronunciation. These alternate pronunciations may reflect either a certain way of speaking used in one part of the country, or a pronunciation used by some speakers in all parts of the country. The first pronunciation shown for a word is often the most common, but frequently the other pronunciations are used just as often. You should not consider the first pronunciation given to be more correct than the others. All the pronunciations in the *Macmillan Contemporary Dictionary* are an accepted part of American English as it is actually spoken today.

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## Inflected Forms

An important characteristic of the English language is that it frequently shows a change in the meaning of a word by *inflection*—a changing of the form of the word. These changed forms—called *inflected forms*—give such information as the tense of the word (*do*, *doing*, *done*, *did*), its number (*man*, *men*; *is*, *are*), or its degree (*good*, *better*, *best*). Inflected forms

are printed in secondary boldface type and are placed after the pronunciation. Syllable division is shown.

**dub**<sup>1</sup> (dub) **dubbed, dub-bing.**

If part of the syllable division of an inflected form is not shown, this means that the division of that part is the same as in the main entry. For example, in the main entry **grad-u-ate** . . . **-at-ed, -at-ing** . . . , the past participle would be divided **grad-u-at-ed**. Pronunciation is not shown unless the pronunciation of the inflected form is not clear from that of the main entry. Also, any inflected form that also appears as a separate main entry is given a pronunciation only at its own entry.

**break** (brāk) **broke** or . . .

**broke** (brōke) *v.* past tense of **break**. . .

When inflected forms belong to a part of speech other than the one that is defined first, they follow immediately after the appropriate part-of-speech label, rather than being placed at the beginning of the entry.

**drug** (drug) *n.* 1. any chemical agent that affects living cells . . . —*v.t.*  
**drugged, drug-ging.** . . .

For *verbs* the inflected forms usually shown are the *past tense*, (The bird *flew* away), the *past participle* (The geese have *flown* south), and the *present participle* (The plane is *flying* too low). They are listed in that order.

**grow** (grō) **grew, grown, grow-ing.**

Often the past tense and the past participle have the same form (We *lost* the game; She has *lost* her summer tan). In such cases, only one form is given for both, followed by the present participle.

**teach** (tēch) **taught, teach-ing.**

Most English verbs form their past tense and past participle by adding the letters **-ed**, and their present participle by adding the letters **-ing**. Inflected forms that follow this regular pattern are not listed here, since they present no special problem in spelling or pronunciation.

**jump** (jump) *v.i.* 1. . .

All forms that are irregular in any way are shown, even if the irregularity is only the dropping of a single letter.

**con-sure** (sen'shər) **-sured, -sur-ing.**

For *nouns* the inflected form shown is the *plural*. Most nouns in English form their plural by adding the letter **-s** (book, books; wire, wires), or the letters **-es** when the singular ends in **-s, -sh, -ch, -x, or -z** (moss, mosses; box, boxes; porch, porches). Inflected forms that follow this regular **-s** or **-es** pattern are not listed in the dictionary. The plural form of a noun is shown whenever it departs from this regular pattern in any way.

**half** (haf) *pl.* halves.

**a-lum-na** (əlum'nə) *pl.* -nae . . .

The plurals are also shown for words whose singular form ends in *-o*, since some such nouns form their plural by adding *-es*, and others by adding only *-s*.

**po-ta-to** (pə tã'tō) *pl.*, *-toes*.

**jun-to** (jun'tō) *pl.*, *-toes*.

Plurals are also shown when the singular form of the entry might create confusion about the formation of the plural.

**mon-goose** (mɒŋ'gūs) *pl.*, *-goos-es*.

**adjutant general**, *pl.*, *adjutants general*.

The plural is shown for **mongoose** because it might otherwise be assumed to be "mon-geese," and for **adjutant general** because it might be assumed to be "adjutant generals." For *adjectives* and *adverbs* the inflected forms shown are the *comparative* and *superlative* degrees. In English the regular pattern for forming the comparative and superlative is to add *-er* and *-est* to the basic word (*higher*, *highest*; *warmer*, *warmest*). Inflected forms that follow this regular pattern are not shown. Inflected forms are given wherever there is any departure from the regular *-er*, *-est* pattern.

**hot** (hɒt) *hot-ter*, *hot-test*.

**good** (gʊd) *bet-ter*, *best*.

The comparative and superlative degrees of an adjective may also be indicated by the use of *more* and *most* (*happier* or *more happy*; *happiest* or *most happy*). You may use either style, depending on which one sounds more natural. There are many words, particularly longer ones, for which the *-er*, *-est* pattern is awkward (*more courageous* is more suitable than *courageouser*). Regular inflected forms are given if a word has both regular and irregular forms.

**ban-dit** (bæn'dit) *pl.*, *ban-dits* or *ban-dit-ti*.

If an irregular form is so different in spelling from its main entry that it would not appear within a short distance of it in alphabetical order, it is given its own main entry at the appropriate alphabetical place.

**drank** (dræŋk) *past tense of drink*.

## 5 Variants

Many words in our language have more than one acceptable spelling, such as *judgment*, *judgement* or *theater*, *theatre*. In such a case, the spelling that occurs more frequently or is generally preferred is given as the main entry. The acceptable variant or variants appear after the pronunciation and inflected forms. A variant spelling is preceded by "also" and is printed in secondary boldface type. The syllable division of a variant is shown, but a variant spelling is not given a separate pronunciation if its pronunciation is the same as that of the main entry.

**czar** (zär) *also*, **tsar**, **tzar**.

**gas-o-line** (gæs'ō lēn) *also*, **gas-o-lene**.

If the variant is not pronounced in exactly the same way as the main entry, it does have its own pronunciation.

**an-i-line** (an'əl in, -īn) *also*, **an-i-lin** (an'əl in).

The variant spellings given in this dictionary are all part of standard English language. The fact that one spelling of a word is given as a main entry, while another spelling appears as a variant, does not mean that you would be entirely wrong if you used the variant.

It simply means that the first spelling is generally preferred by most users of the American language. Sometimes two or more different forms have the same meaning, such as *cougar*, *puma*, *mountain lion*, and *catamount*. The form that occurs most frequently is given as the main entry. The other forms, which are called *variant terms*, appear at the end of the entry. A variant term is preceded by "Also" and is printed in secondary boldface type. Variant terms are not given a pronunciation, since they are pronounced at their own main entry.

**scatter rug**, small rug used to cover part of a floor. Also, **throw rug**.

If a variant spelling or variant term does not fall close to the defined entry in alphabetical order, it has its own separate entry referring you to the main entry.

**es-thet-ic** (əs thet'ik) *adj.* aesthetic.

**cot-ton-mouth** (kɒt'ən mouth') *n.* water moccasin.

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## Parts of Speech

This dictionary uses the traditional parts of speech in classifying words. The names of parts of speech are indicated by the following abbreviations:

<i>n.</i>	noun	<i>adj.</i>	adjective
<i>pron.</i>	pronoun	<i>adv.</i>	adverb
<i>v.</i>	verb	<i>prep.</i>	preposition
<i>v.t.</i>	transitive verb	<i>conj.</i>	conjunction
<i>v.i.</i>	intransitive verb	<i>interj.</i>	interjection

All the definitions of a word that have the same part of speech are grouped together. The part-of-speech label precedes the first definition in the group. There is only one main entry for each word, no matter how many parts of speech it may have. Each additional part of speech is introduced by the appropriate label, preceded by a dash.

**safe** (sāf) **saf-er**, **saf-est**. *adj.* 1. free from harm or danger . . . —*n.* 1. strong container of metal or other material . . .

In general, the different parts of speech of a particular word are arranged according to how frequently they occur in the language. For a particular word, the part of speech which occurs most commonly is defined first, the one which occurs second most frequently is defined second, and so on.

**flat**<sup>1</sup> (flat) **flat-ter**, **flat-test**. *adj.* 1. extending horizontally with little or no slope or inclination . . . —*n.* 1. flat part or surface . . . —*adv.* 1. in a flat manner; flatly. —*v.t.*, **flat-ted**, **flat-ting**. 1. to make flat . . . —*v.i.* to become flat.

This dictionary does not give a part-of-speech label to an entry that consists of more than one word.

**end zone**, area at either end . . .

You should not assume that the parts of speech assigned to a word in the dictionary cover all the possible uses of the word. A word may function as a certain part of speech in a particular sentence, without really belonging to that part of speech. For example, a word entered here as a noun may also be used to modify other nouns, and thus function as an adjective, as in "an *asphalt* driveway," "kitchen *furniture*," or "a *progress* report." The most common example of a grammatical form not defined in this book is the use of verbs as adjectives or nouns. Verbs are often used in the present and past participles as adjectives (*recurring* pains, a *rejected* suitor), and in the present participle as nouns (*Gambling* is legal in Nevada). Such forms are not entered separately, unless their meaning is not fully explained by the definitions given for the verb from which they are derived.

## Subentries

A *subentry* is a word, or sometimes a phrase, that is very closely related to a main word, but is slightly different in form. A subentry appears under the main entry to which it is related and is printed in secondary boldface type. A subentry may be the plural of a singular entry, or the capitalized form of an entry that begins with a small letter.

**clas-sic** . . . *n.* . . . 2. the classics, literature of ancient Greece and Rome.

**cyn-ic** . . . *n.* . . . 2. Cynic, member of a group of Greek philosophers . . .

Another basic type of subentry is a word or phrase that is so closely related to an important main entry that it is clearer and more meaningful to define it there than to give it its own main entry.

**e-clipse** . . . *n.* 1. apparent partial or total darkening of one celestial body by its passage through the shadow of another. In a **solar eclipse** the moon passes between the sun and the earth . . . In a **lunar eclipse** the earth moves between the sun and the moon . . .

## Idioms

An *idiom* is a group of words whose meaning cannot be understood from the meanings of its individual words. For example, the idiom **to hit the sack** means "to go to bed," a meaning that cannot be understood from the separate words of the phrase. Idioms are entered in secondary boldface type under the main entry of their key word. Thus **to hit the sack** would appear under **sack** with the noun definitions. If an entry has five or more idioms for one part of speech, they are entered in an indented column under that part of speech. If there are fewer than five idioms, they appear as numbered definitions within the body of the entry. Some idioms have more than one form in which they are used. Rather than each variant being repeated in full, the variant words are put in parentheses in secondary boldface type. This indicates that the variant words may each be substituted in the idiom. For example, under **set** the idiom "**to set on (or upon)**, to attack or urge to attack," appears. The words in the parentheses show that this idiom may appear as **to set on** or **to set upon** without any change in meaning.

## Definitions

The definitions of an entry are grouped according to part of speech. They are numbered consecutively in secondary boldface type.

**mid-dle** (mid'əl) *adj.* 1. equally distant from the sides, extremities, or exterior points: *The middle office is his. We sat in the middle row.* 2. being or occurring halfway between two things . . .

Related senses of one basic meaning are grouped together under one number and lettered in secondary boldface type.

**al-bum** . . . *n.* . . . 2.a. booklike holder with envelopes for phonograph records. b. long-playing phonograph record, or set of records sold as a unit. . . .

In some definitions the abbreviation "esp.," meaning "especially," is used to indicate a sense that is not different enough to be a separate definition.

**ap-pel-lant** . . . *n.* one who appeals, esp. to a higher court. . . .

In general, the individual definitions are arranged according to the frequency with which they occur in the language. The meaning that is used most commonly is placed first. The other definitions follow according to their relative frequency. This is done so that you



can locate the meaning that you are looking for as quickly and as easily as possible.

**ba-by** (ba'bē) *pl. -bies. n.* 1. newborn or very young child. 2. youngest member of a family or group. 3. one who behaves like a child; childish or immature person. 4. newborn or very young animal. 5. *Slang.* object of special attention or pride . . .

Within a particular definition, there may appear one or more statements or synonymous words separated by semicolons which serve to point out different ways of describing the same basic meaning. In the example below, "to irritate greatly," "provoke to anger," and "infuriate" are all different ways of explaining the word **exasperate**.

**ex-as-per-ate** . . . *v.t.* to irritate greatly; provoke to anger; infuriate . . .

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## Labels

Labels such as *Informal*, *British*, and *Chemistry* provide additional information about a word, form, or definition. The labels used in this dictionary fall into two basic categories: *subject labels* and *usage labels*.

### A. Subject Labels

Subject labels indicate the field of knowledge. They are especially helpful when the wording of a definition does not clearly show that it applies to a particular field.

**green** . . . 4. *Golf.* area around a cup, having very thick, closely cut grass.

When a word has a large number of definitions, the presence of a subject label makes it much easier to locate a specialized definition.

**run** . . . *v.i.* 1. . . . 32. *Law.* to have legal validity or force . . .

### B. Usage Labels

Many words and meanings in English are not used throughout the entire range of the language. Some are not common in all parts of the English-speaking world; others rarely appear in modern speech and writing; still others are not suitable to be used in certain kinds of speech and writing. This dictionary employs usage labels to indicate that a particular word or definition is restricted to a certain area or level of language. If a word or meaning does not have a usage label, you may consider it appropriate to be used in any kind of speech or writing. **Informal:** The style of language that a person uses varies according to the situation. You would not use the same language in writing an essay that you use in talking on the telephone to a friend. The label *Informal* indicates that a word or meaning is not suitable to be used in a formal context, such as a legal contract, a technical article, or a scientific lecture. An *Informal* label does not mean that a word or definition is incorrect. But just as certain clothing is considered to be more appropriate for a picnic or a trip to the beach than for a wedding ceremony, certain words are more suited to informal contexts than to formal ones. Any word or meaning labeled *Informal* in this book may be used freely in ordinary conversation, and in writing that is intended to have the same feeling as actual speech. But you should remember that the use of an informal word can affect the tone of formal writing or speech. **Slang:** The label *Slang* is applied to words or meanings that are extremely informal. Slang is composed mostly of new words or of unusual uses of existing words, and it is usually used to produce a certain effect, such as humor or exaggeration. New slang terms are constantly being added to the language, and many existing slang terms pass out of use after having enjoyed only a brief period of popularity. **British:** The label *British* indicates that a word, meaning, spelling, or the like is common in Great Britain but is not generally used by American speakers and writers. This does not mean that something labeled *British* in this book will never be found in American usage. Today the two cultures influence one another to such an extent that an absolute distinction between British and American English is not really possible.