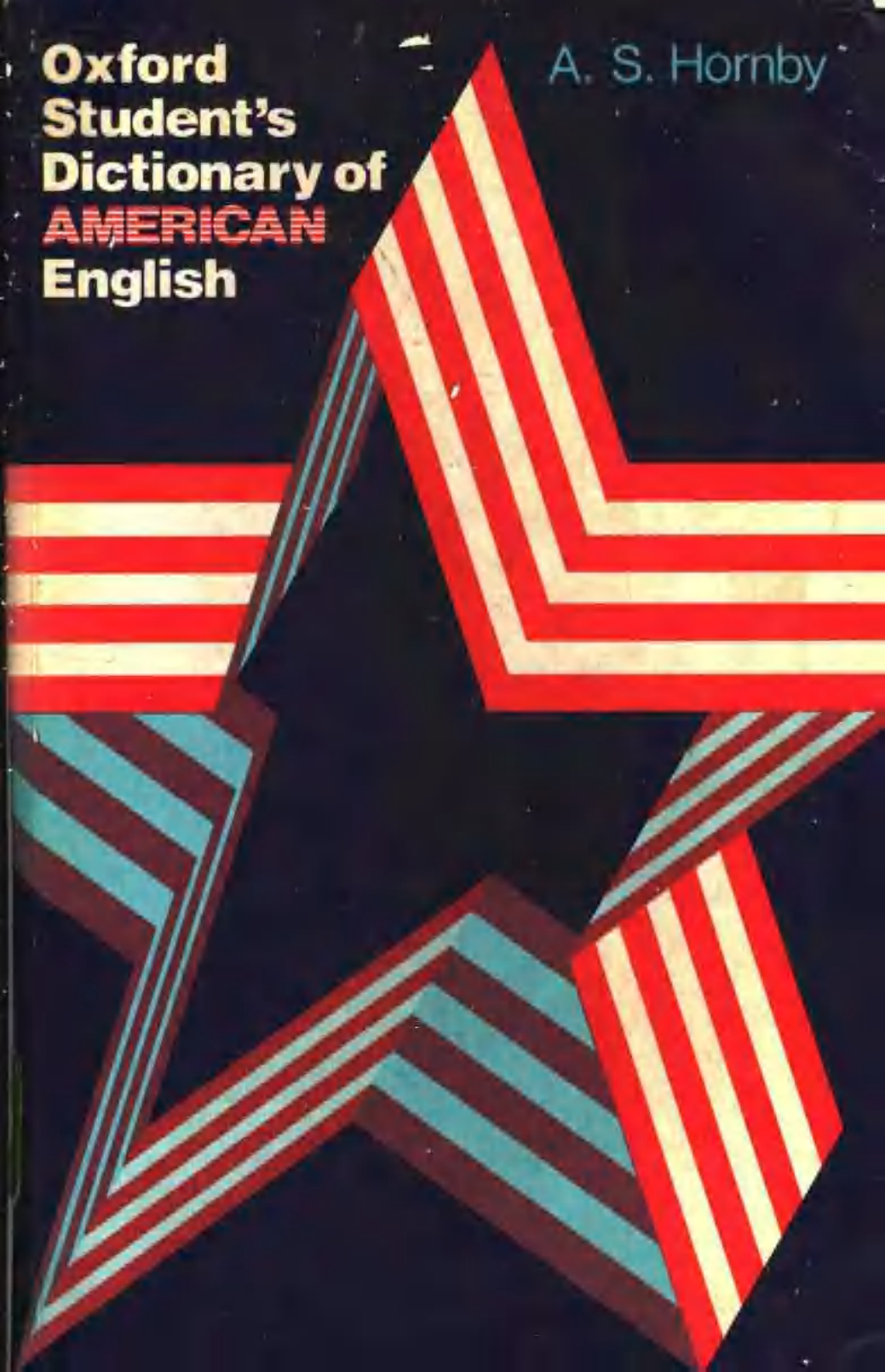
Oxford Student's Dictionary of AMERICAN English

A. S. Hornby



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Phonetic symbols

Phonetic information is given between diagonals, /. . ./, in this Dictionary.

Vowels and diphthongs

/i/	*as in*	**see**	/si/	/u/	*as in*	**too**	/tu/
/ɪ/	*as in*	**sit**	/sɪt/	/ə/	*as in*	**above**	/əˈbəv/
/e/	*as in*	**bet**	/bet/	/eɪ/	*as in*	**face**	/feɪs/
/æ/	*as in*	**hat**	/hæt/	/oʊ/	*as in*	**home**	/hoʊm/
/ɑ/	*as in*	**hot**	/hɑt/	/aɪ/	*as in*	**five**	/fɑiv/
/ɔ/	*as in*	**talk**	/tɔk/	/aʊ/	*as in*	**out**	/aʊt/
/o/	*as in*	**book**	/bok/	/ɔɪ/	*as in*	**boy**	/bɔi/

Consonants

/p/	*as in*	**pen**	/pen/	/ʃ/	*as in*	**she**	/ʃi/
/b/	*as in*	**bad**	/bæd/	/ʒ/	*as in*	**azure**	/ˈæʒər/
/t/	*as in*	**ten**	/ten/	/tʃ/	*as in*	**chin**	/tʃɪn/
/d/	*as in*	**dog**	/dɔg/	/dʒ/	*as in*	**just**	/dʒəst/
/k/	*as in*	**cat**	/kæt/	/h/	*as in*	**how**	/hau/
/g/	*as in*	**got**	/gat/	/m/	*as in*	**mark**	/mark/
/f/	*as in*	**fall**	/fɔl/	/n/	*as in*	**none**	/nən/
/v/	*as in*	**verse**	/vərs/	/ŋ/	*as in*	**sing**	/sɪŋ/
/θ/	*as in*	**thin**	/θɪn/	/l/	*as in*	**leg**	/leg/
/ð/	*as in*	**then**	/ðen/	/r/	*as in*	**roar**	/rɔr/
/s/	*as in*	**sauce**	/sɔs/	/y/	*as in*	**yes**	/yes/
/z/	*as in*	**zoo**	/zu/	/w/	*as in*	**wet**	/wet/

/ˈ/ indicates *primary stress* on the syllable immediately following it, as in /əˈbaut/ **about**.

/ˌ/ indicates *secondary stress* on the syllable immediately following it, as in /ˈkanˌtækt/ **contact**.

/-/ preceding or following parts of a repeated phonetic transcription indicates that only the repeated part changes.

Acknowledgments

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N.Y.C. W.A.S.
1983

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Preface

This Dictionary is an American adaptation of the *Oxford Student's Dictionary of Current English*, with some inclusion of advanced level material from the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, somewhat expanded to serve learners of American English through the Intermediate level. It lists the more usual words, compounds, and idiomatic expressions that the learner is likely to hear in everyday conversation among educated Americans or to see written in letters, newspapers, and documents of the kind that one might be expected to encounter when beginning to work or study in the United States. This Dictionary also contains most of the words used in modern American books and periodicals of all but the most technical or literary kind. For listed words there is information on spelling, pronunciation, grammatical use, and meaning. In addition, there are often example sentences or phrases to illustrate details of usage, and special guidance is given on difficult points of spelling, pronunciation, and meaning.

The exclusive use of American spelling conventions should pose no problem to learners accustomed to British usage if a few general correspondences are kept in mind. These, however, have many exceptions and cannot be taken as a sure guide for converting from British to American spelling, or vice versa.

- American *-er* for British *-re* in some words; *center.centre, theater: theatre* (but both American and British *neuter, acre*).
- American *-ize* for the more frequently used *-ise* of British English; *organize:organise* (but both American and British *recognize, advise*).
- American *(-)e-* for British *(-)ae-/(-)æ-* or *(-)oe-/(-)œ-*; *etiology aetiology/ætiology, fetus:foetus/fœtus.*
- American *-or* for British *-our* in many words; *color:colour, honor:honour, labor.labour* (but both American and British *glamour*).
- American *-l-* for British *-ll-* when certain verbs ending in *-l* are inflected with *-ing/-ed/-er*; *leveling levelling, reveled:revelled, traveler:traveller.*
- Different American and British spellings of individual words; American *jail* for British *gaol*, American *check* for British *cheque.*
- American use of the period (.) after certain kinds of abbreviations which may be without it in British usage; *Mr./Dr.:Mr/Dr.*

As with the spelling, the pronunciation indicated in this Dictionary is fully American. The tradition established in the *Oxford Student's Dictionary of Current English* and the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* of using the phonetic symbols of the International Phonetic Association is continued here, but the shift in focus from British to American pronunciation has prompted some changes in the use of specific symbols as well as in the indication of stress and length. Teachers and learners who may take up the use of this Dictionary after having familiarized themselves with its British counterparts should keep the following changes in mind:

- The symbol /y/ is used instead of /j/ for the beginning sound of *yes*. This is the only true departure from the International Phonetic Association alphabet, but it is a change in line with current American linguistic and pedagogical practice.
- The symbol /ə/ is used for both the unstressed and stressed vowels in *above* /əˈbəv/ (transcribed as /əˈbʌv/ in the British system), the /ə/-/ʌ/ phonetic distinction of British pronunciation being much less evident in the United States, and in any case a function of the degree of stress.
- The symbol /ː/, used after a vowel in British transcription to indicate the lengthening of that vowel, is here discarded because of the predictability of vowel length in American pronunciation from the following consonant.
- The symbol /i/ is used instead of /ɪ/ for the final element of the diphthongs /ai, ei, ɔi/ as well as for the final unstressed vowel in, e.g., *alley* /ˈæli/, *funny* /ˈfəni/ as being a more accurate representation of distinctively American usage. For the same reason, the symbol /u/ is used instead of /ʊ/ for the final element in the diphthongs /au, ou/.
- The symbol /o/ is used instead of /ə/ to represent the first element in the diphthong in *note* /nout/, *road* /roud/, etc., as being more representative of American pronunciation.
- Secondary stress, indicated by the symbol /ˌ/ placed before the syllable which it affects, is both frequent and prominent in American English, and is consistently marked throughout this Dictionary.

Learners who wish to pursue on their own the study of American pronunciation, and in particular the interesting details of regional and social variation, should consult one or more of the books available on the subject. Among these, the following are considered standard works:

Arthur J. Bronstein, *The Pronunciation of American English*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1960.

Laurie Bauer, John M. Dienhart, Hans H. Hartvigson, and Leif Kvistgaard Jakobsen, *American English Pronunciation*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1980.

John S. Kenyon, *American Pronunciation*. 6th edition. Ann Arbor, Mich.: George Wahr. 1935

Charles K. Thomas, *An Introduction to the Phonetics of American English*. New York: Ronald Press, 1947.

All of these works use the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association, though they differ in some details of its use both among each other and from this Dictionary.

Certain current and more or less permanent slang words have been included in the Dictionary, but there has been no attempt to include the considerable body of slang, which varies from place to place and is always changing. Those interested in a more complete reference can consult the *Dictionary of American Slang* by Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner. 2nd supplemental ed. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975.

Using the Dictionary

Finding words and meanings

Headwords and entries

The words to be explained in the Dictionary are arranged in alphabetical order and printed in **bold** type. Each of these is called a *headword*. A single headword together with the information explaining its meanings and uses is called an *entry*. Sometimes two or more headwords have the same spelling, in which case they are numbered, for example, **die**[1], **die**[2]. Numbered headwords either have different meanings or they are different parts of speech. Necessary or helpful information on inflection (to be discussed under **inflected forms,** below) is given in the entry for the uninflected headword, so that inflected forms (the plural of nouns, the past tense of verbs, etc.) are usually not listed as separate headwords. For example, the comparative (*faster*) and superlative (*fastest*) of an adjective (*fast*) are to be looked up in the Dictionary under the uninflected headword (**fast**). To help the learner, an exception to this is made in the case of irregular past tense or past participle forms of verbs, which are listed alphabetically like headwords (though without pronunciation) followed by a reference to the full entries for the verbs:

sprang *pt* of spring[3]
sprung *pp* of spring[3]

A further exception is made in the case of very irregular plural forms of nouns (e.g., **brethren**), which are given entries of their own.

Derivatives and compounds

A *derivative* is a word formed by adding an ending (called a *suffix*) to a word (usually to an uninflected form of the kind entered as headwords in this Dictionary, but sometimes also to an inflected word or one which already has another suffix). For example, **acceptable** is a derivative of **accept**, formed by means of the suffix *-able*. A *compound* is a word or expression formed out of two separate words. It is usually written as one word (**strongbox**), though sometimes with a hyphen (**strong-arm**) or even as separate words (**strong room**). (In all cases, compounds have a characteristic stress pattern of primary stress on the first element and secondary stress or no stress at all on the second element, e.g., ˈ**strongˌbox** "a strongly built box (specifically) for keeping valuables," in contrast to the uncompounded ˌ**strong** ˈ**box**, "a box (which just happens to be) built strongly." For many such compounds, there is a lack of agreement among users of English as to whether they should be written together, with a hyphen, or separated, and the form each compound takes in this Dictionary is the one judged to be most common in current American usage. Most derivatives and compounds are printed in **bold** type of a slightly smaller size than for headwords, and are listed alphabetically after an entry, with compounds listed before derivatives. Sometimes, however, a derivative or compound has *its own* separate entry. For derivatives, this may be because the spelling is very different. Compare **adhere** with its derivative **adhesion**. Or, for both derivatives and compounds, it may be because there is no clear

carry-over of the original meaning. For example, the derivative **scarcely** has a very different meaning from that of its parent word **scarce**, and the meaning of **horseradish** is not easily connected to that of **horse**.

Idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs

An *idiom* or *idiomatic expression* is a phrase or sentence of two or more words that has a special meaning of its own. Idioms are printed in ***bold italic*** type, and are listed alphabetically at the end of the entry, but before both compounds and derivatives. In the longer entries, they are placed at the end of the numbered definitions to which they are most closely related. To look up an idiom in the Dictionary, turn to the entry for the most important word in the phrase or sentence (usually a noun, verb, or adjective). For example, ***pick holes in*** is found in the entry for **hole**.

English contains many phrases made up of a verb and a preposition or adverb, e.g., ***go back, run away, take (something) down, take after (somebody)***. Many of these phrases are idiomatic, and are printed and listed in the same way as other idioms. However, in the entries for the very common verbs like **go, make, put, take,** these verbal phrases are all gathered together in alphabetical order at the end of the entry under the heading "Special uses with *adverbial particles* and *prepositions*."

Numbered definitions

Many entries are divided into sections numbered in bold type: **1, 2, 3, 4,** etc. These numbers show the different meanings or usages that the headword has. Definitions are listed in order of meanings from the most common or simple to the most uncommon or complicated.

Example phrases and sentences

These form a large and very important part of the Dictionary. They follow the definitions and are printed in *italic* type. The more important functions of these example phrases and sentences are:

- They show how the headword, derivative, compound, or idiomatic expression is used in different sentence patterns.
- They show the kinds of style or context in which the word or phrase is typically used, including the sorts of words used with it.
- They often include information on where to put the stress when using the headword in a phrase or sentence.
- They teach the writing conventions of correct punctuation and the use of capital letters, since many of the examples are full, correctly written and punctuated sentences.

The tilde ~

If a headword has more than three letters, to save space the symbol ~, called a *tilde* /'tɪldə/, is used in place of the headword in example phrases and sentences.

The box □

Many headwords, compounds, and derivatives can be used as more than one part of speech. For example, the word **picture** and the compound **whitewash** can both be used as a noun or as a verb, while the derivative **alcoholic** can be used as an adjective or as a noun. These different sections within an entry are divided from one another by a box □.

The diagonal / and brackets ()

The diagonal, /, is used in example phrases and sentences as well as in compounds and idioms to show that the items separated by it are permissible alternatives. For example, in ***not care/give a hoot/two hoots***, the diagonals indicate that this idiom can be used in any of the following forms: ***not care a hoot, not give a hoot, not care two hoots, not give two hoots***. (This use of a single diagonal to separate alternative expressions should not be confused with the use of a pair of diagonals to enclose phonetic information.)

Brackets, (), are used to enclose an optional word or phrase. For example, in ***make (both) ends meet***, the brackets show that this idiom can be used in either of the forms ***make ends meet*** or ***make both ends meet***.

The cross-reference sign ⇨

A cross-reference is a reference in one entry to information in another, and is indicated by the sign ⇨ (which can be understood as meaning "see," "look at," or "refer to") followed by the appropriate headword. For example, ⇨ **fire**[1] **(6)** means "look at definition number 6 in the entry for the headword **fire**[1] "

Word-division in writing

The recommended places for word-division are given in the Dictionary for all headwords, derivatives, and compounds. A bold dot (·) is printed where division is recommended. For example, **pre·oc·cu·pa·tion** means that, for this word, the following divisions are possible:

pre-	*preoc-*	*preoccu-*	*preoccupa-*
occupation	*cupation*	*pation*	*tion*

Inflected forms

The plural of nouns

The regular plural of most nouns is formed by adding *-s* to the end of the noun, e.g., **boat:boats, apple:apples, idea:ideas**. But if the noun ends in *-s*, *-z*, *-x*, *-ch*, or *-sh*, then the plural is formed by adding *-es* to the noun, e.g., **bus:buses** (or **busses**, since a single final *-s* after a vowel may be doubled before *-es*), **box:boxes, dish-dishes**.

Nouns ending in *-y*, if the *-y* is preceded by a consonant, form the plural by changing the *-y* to *-ies*, e.g., **city:cities**. If the *-y* is preceded by a vowel, the plural is *-ys*, e.g., **monkey:monkeys**. This spelling information is given in the Dictionary for all nouns ending in *-y*.

Some nouns ending in *-o* add *-s* to form the plural, e.g., **piano:pianos**. Others add *-es* to form the plural, e.g., **Negro: Negroes**. Still others add either *-s* or *-es*, such as **volcanos** or **volcanoes** for **volcano**. This spelling information is given in the Dictionary for all nouns ending in *-o*.

The possessive of nouns

The possessive of most nouns is formed by adding *-'s* (always with the apostrophe) to the end of the noun, e.g., **man:man's** (as in *the man's hat*), **bride:bride's, boss:boss's** (as in *the boss's wife*). But if the noun is in the plural inflection, the possessive is usually written merely as an apostrophe, so that while the singular **dog** has the possessive **dog's**, the plural **dogs** has the possessive **dogs'**. (For the pronunciation of these possessives, see the section entitled **Pronunciation**.)

The inflected forms of verbs

The third person present singular of a verb is formed by adding *-s* to the end of the verb, e.g., **fit:fits, write:writes, see:sees**. But if the verb ends in *-s*, *-z*, *-x*, *-ch*, or *-sh*, then *-es* is added to the verb, as in **bless:blesses, mix:mixes, touch:touches**. The third person present singular of verbs ending in *-y* is formed by changing the *-y* to *-ies*, e.g., **carry:carries**.

The past tense (pt) and past participle (pp) of a verb are regularly formed by adding *-ed* to the end of the verb, e.g., **pull:pulled, push:pushed, follow:followed**. But if the verb ends in *-e*, then these are formed by adding *-d*, e.g., **smile:smiled, agree:agreed**. Verbs that end in *-y* form the past tense and the past participle by changing the *-y* into *-ied*, as in **carry:carried**. This last change is indicated in the Dictionary for all verbs that end in *-y*. The present participle of a verb is formed by adding *-ing* to the end of the verb, e.g., **think:thinking, go:going, be:being, see:seeing**. But if the verb ends in a single *-e* which is "silent," then the present participle is formed by dropping this *-e* from the end of the verb and then adding *-ing*, e.g., **love:loving, owe:owing, tire:tiring**. (Note that, for verbs ending in *-y*, the *-y* is neither dropped nor changed when adding *-ing*, e.g., **try:trying, carry:carrying**.)

Doubling consonants in inflected forms

Many verbs that end with a single consonant have this letter doubled in the spelling for the present and past participles and the past tense, as in **drop:dropping:dropped**. In the same way, some adjectives double the last consonant in the spelling for the comparative and superlative, e.g., **hot:hotter:hottest**. But if the vowel before the final consonant is not stressed, then the final consonant is not doubled in American usage; **travel:traveling:traveled** and the verb **market: marketing:marketed**. If the final consonant of a headword verb is doubled in the present and past participle and past tense, and that of a headword adjective is doubled in the comparative and superlative, the Dictionary shows this by printing the doubled letter in brackets, e.g., **drop (-pp-), hot (-tt-)**.

The same kind of doubling occurs when derivatives are formed from verbs and adjectives through the addition of the suffixes *-en* (making a verb out of an adjective), *-er* (making a noun meaning "person or thing that does . . ." out of a verb), and *-ish* (causing an adjective to mean "somewhat . . ."), e.g., **red:redden:reddish, strip:stripper**. Common words formed in this way are listed in the Dictionary either as derivatives after a headword, or as headwords themselves. In either case, the consonant doubling is indicated in the spelling of the word itself.

An *irregular* form of a word is an inflected form that is not made in the usual (or regular) way. For example, the normal way of forming the plural of an English noun in writing is to add *-s* or *-es*, and the normal way of forming a past tense or past participle of a verb is to add *-d* or *-ed*. Whenever such a form is made in any other way—that is, whenever it is irregular—then this is given (together with the pronunciation, if necessary) at the beginning of the entry. For example:

axis /ˈæksɪs/ *n* (*pl* **axes** /ˈækˌsiz/)
choose /tʃuz/ *vt, vi* (*pt* **chose** /tʃouz/, *pp* **chosen** /ˈtʃouzən/)
bad /bæd/ *adj* (**worse, worst**)

Comparative and superlative forms of adjectives

The comparative and superlative forms of all adjectives of more than two syllables, and many of two syllables as well, are made by using the words *more* (for the comparative) and *most* (for the superlative) before the adjective, e.g., *more interesting, most pleasant*. All adjectives of one syllable and many adjectives of two syllables make the comparative and superlative forms by adding *-r* and *-st*, or *-er* and *-est*, or *-ier* and *-iest* to the end of the adjective, e.g., **gentle: gentler:gentlest, cold:colder:coldest, happy:happier:happiest**. In the Dictionary, an adjective that has a comparative and superlative form of this sort has (-r, -st) or (-er, -est) or (-ier, -iest) printed in the entry.

Grammatical and stylistic usage labels

Countable and uncountable nouns

The correct use of the noun is an important but difficult skill to acquire when learning English. For example, some nouns can be used in the plural form, while others cannot. In addition, many nouns have several meanings, some of which may have a plural form and some of which may not. This Dictionary gives the learner special help in this area by the use of the symbols [C], [U], or [C, U] in the entry for a noun.

[C] means that the noun has both a singular and a plural form. It can be used in the singular with *a, an, another* (as *a bottle, an apple, another boy*), in the plural with *many* (*many apples*), and in the singular or plural with numbers (*one bottle, six bottles*). Nouns that can be used in these ways are *countable*, and [C] in the entry indicates this.

[U] means that the noun does not have a plural form. It can be used in the singular with words like *some, enough, much, more* (*some information, enough money, much noise*). It cannot be used with *a, an, another*, with *many*, or with numbers. Nouns of this type are *uncountable*, and [U] in the entry indicates this.

[C, U] means that the noun can be used either as countable or uncountable. For example, **coffee** is used as [C] in *Two coffees, please!* and as [U] in *Have some more coffee!*

Stylistic values

Some words and expressions may be limited in their appropriateness to certain styles of speaking or writing, or have other kinds of limitations on their use. Where it is important for the learner to know about limitations, the fact is indicated in this Dictionary by a usage label added in brackets to the entry. These labels include:

(*lit*) = *literary*
(*hum*) = *humorous*
(*dated*)
(*formal*)
(*informal*)
(*sl*) = *slang*
(*vulgar*)

Of these, *literary* means that the word or expression is limited to (or at least characteristic of) formal written language, and especially to literature; *humorous* means that the word or expression is hardly ever used seriously in the sense given; and *dated*, of course, indicates that the word or expression is considered old-fashioned (at least in the meaning given). The other labels are much less exact in the kinds of limitations on usage that they indicate. In this Dictionary, the labeling of specific words and expressions as *formal, informal, slang*, or *vulgar* is in accordance with current American stylistic values and, as such, may differ from what the labeling would be in other parts of the English-speaking world. But even within the United States, the stylistic value of a given word or expression may differ somewhat according to region or to the age and social identity of the user. For

this reason, such labels have been applied only when it would appear that there is a great deal of agreement among educated Americans on the stylistic value of a particular word.

In the Dictionary at least one pronunciation is given for every headword. The kind of pronunciation indicated is that of educated Americans whose speech is not strongly marked by regionalism. It is the kind of pronunciation that is now in the process of being adopted by younger speakers in all parts of the United States, and which has for some time been used by most professional announcers in radio and television. Beyond this informal unifying trend within an older pattern of regionally flavored educated English, there is no official standard of pronunciation that Americans are expected to adhere to, nor is there a culturally homogeneous social elite in the country whose speech might serve as a national model. Consequently there are often several current and acceptable pronunciations of a word, and the more common of these variants are included in this Dictionary. Where the variation is created by the presence or absence of a sound, this is shown by writing the corresponding phonetic symbol in brackets. For example, **huge** /(h)yudʒ/ and **when** /(h)wen/ indicate that, for these words, one may hear and say either /hyudʒ/ and /hwen/ or /yudʒ/ and /wen/. Other common alternative pronunciations are shown by fully or partly repeated transcriptions, e.g., **fog** /fɔg, fag/, **orange** /ˈɔrɪndʒ, ˈar-/.

Some kinds of phonetic variation are so regular that they can be stated as general correspondences, and need not be included in the phonetic transcriptions of individual words. One such case involves the replacement of /æ/ by /e/ before /r/ in the speech of many Americans, so that **marry** /ˈmæri/ and **merry** /ˈmeri/ are pronounced alike by them, as /ˈmeri/. Another case of automatic variation is the drawing out of vowels before /r/ by adding a /ə/-like gliding sound after the vowel; e.g., **here** /hɪr/ becomes /hɪər/, **door** /dɔr/ becomes /dɔər/, **poor** /pʊr/ becomes /pʊər/, **marry** /ˈmæri/ (or /ˈmeri/) becomes /ˈmæəri/ (or /ˈmeəri/), etc. In addition, some Americans "drop" the /r/ after drawing out the vowel in this manner, whenever the /r/ would otherwise come before a consonant or at the end of a word; e.g., **short** becomes /ʃɔət/, **here** becomes /hɪə/, but **weary** stays /ˈ/wɪri/ or /ˈwɪəri/ because the /r/ is followed by a vowel.

Note: In the phonetic transcriptions given in the entries, the symbol /r/ will occasionally be written in brackets, e.g., **reservoir** /ˈrezə(r)ˌvwar/, **surprise** /sə(r)ˈpraiz/. This is to indicate that, even among those Americans who normally pronounce /r/ before another consonant and at the end of a word, these words may sometimes be pronounced without the bracketed /r/.

Vowel lengthening

In American speech, vowels tend to be pronounced somewhat longer before voiced consonants (/b, d, g, v, ð, z, ʒ, dʒ, m, n, ŋ, l, r/) and sometimes before the voiceless fricatives (/f, θ, s, ʃ/) than before the voiceless stops (/p, t, k, tʃ/). This is not shown in the phonetic transcriptions, however, since it is entirely automatic.

Syllabic consonants

The unstressed combinations /ən/ and /əl/, as well as /ər/ in speech of those persons who do not "drop" final /r/, are often pronounced without a distinct /ə/, but rather with the /n, l, r/ forming a syllable by themselves. This happens especially at the end of a word. For example, **sudden, middle, matter,** which are given phonetically in the Dictionary as /ˈsədən/, /ˈmɪdəl/, and /ˈmætər/, often sound almost like /sədn/, /mɪdl/, and /mætr/. Those speakers who do not "drop" final /r/ give this syllabic /r/ sound to /ər/ even when stressed, so that, e.g., **fur** /fər/ and **work** /wərk/ sound almost like /fr/ and /wrk/. Those who "drop" final /r/, however, pronounce stressed /ər/ when final or before a consonant as a very tense, lengthened /ə/.

Stress in words and compounds

When an English word consists of more than one syllable, one of them will be spoken with more force than the others. This force is called *stress* (or, in contrast to other, weaker stresses, *primary stress*) and is shown in this Dictionary by placing the mark /ˈ/ before the stressed syllable in the phonetic transcription, and sometimes in what is otherwise the regular spelling. For example, in **any** the transcription /ˈeni/ shows that the stress is on the first syllable, while in **depend** the spelling **de'pend** or transcription /dɪˈpend/ shows that it is on the second syllable.

In some words, especially compounds, some other syllable may be spoken with a force that is stronger than for unstressed syllables, but not as strong as the syllable marked with /ˈ/. This is called *secondary stress* and is marked with /ˌ/ in the same way as for primary stress, e.g., **dictate** /ˈdɪkˌteit/, **module** /ˈmaˌdʒul/, **rodeo** /ˈroudiˌou/ (though **radio** is usually /ˈreidiou/, without a secondary stress), **housework** /ˈhausˌwərk/, **playboy** /ˈpleiˌbɔi/. Although the compounds listed at the end of an entry are usually not given in phonetic transcription, stress patterns are marked where necessary or helpful.

The pronunciation of some common inflections

The written forms of some common inflections have been given under **Inflected forms** of the headword. Some of these have more than one pronunciation, though this is not always clear from their spellings. Because the pronunciation of inflections involves phonetic rules, different inflections may be pronounced alike if they share certain basic sounds. Where this is the case, the inflections are grouped together for the purpose of making the following pronunciation rules as general as possible.

1. *Inflections in* **-s**. These include the regular plural *-s/-es* and possessive *-'s/-'* of nouns and the third person singular present *-s/-es* of verbs.

If the uninflected noun or verb (that is, the singular form of nouns and the infinitive form of verbs) ends in a vowel sound or in /b, d, g, v, ð, m, n, ŋ, l, r/ these inflections are pronounced */-z/*. For example, (noun) **bee** /bi/: plural **bees** /biz/; (noun) **cow** /kau/: plural **cows** /kauz/; (noun) **friend** /frend/: possessive **friend's** /frendz/; (verb) **bring** /brɪŋ/: third person singular present **brings** /brɪŋz/.

If the uninflected noun or verb ends in /p, t, k, f, θ/ the same inflections are pronounced /-s/. For example, (noun) **cat** /kæt/: plural **cats** /kæts/; (noun) **wife** /waif/: possessive **wife's** /waifs/; (verb) **step** /step/: third person singular present **steps** /steps/.

If the uninflected noun or verb ends in /s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ/ these inflections are pronounced /-ɪz/. For example, (noun) **face** /feis/: plural **faces** /ˈfeisɪz/; (noun) **class** /klæs/: plural **classes** /ˈklæsɪz/; (noun) **boss** /bɔs/: possessive **boss's** /ˈbɔsɪz/); (verb) **pledge** /pledʒ/: third person singular present **pledges** /ˈpledʒɪz/.

One effect of these rules is that the possessive of singular nouns and the regular plural of nouns are pronounced alike, even though they are spelled differently. But a special rule applies whenever, in forming the possessive plural of nouns, the possessive inflection is added to a noun which already has on it the regular plural inflection *-s/-es*. The rule is that the possessive inflection is written (though simply as an apostrophe, in such a case) but not pronounced, which means that regular possessive plurals sound exactly like (though written differently from) the singular possessive and regular plural forms. In the case of nouns having irregular plurals without *-s/-es*, however, this rule does not apply, and the singular possessive, plural, and plural possessive forms are all pronounced differently, e.g.:

Singular	Singular possessive	Plural	Plural possessive
dog /dɔg/	**dog's** /dɔgz/	**dogs** /dɔgz/	**dogs'** /dɔgz/
cat /kæt/	**cat's** /kæts/	**cats** /kæts/	**cats'** /kæts/
boss /bɔs/	**boss's** /ˈbɔsɪz/	**bosses** /ˈbɔsɪz/	**bosses'** /ˈbɔsɪz/
But:			
man /mæn/	**man's** /mænz/	**men** /men/	**men's** /menz/

Information on irregular plurals is given in the appropriate entries in the body of the Dictionary.

2. *Inflections in -d*. These include the regular past tense and past participle *-d/-ed* of verbs.

If the uninflected verb ends in a vowel sound or in /b, g, v, ð, z, ʒ, dʒ, m, n, ŋ, l, r/ these inflections are pronounced /-d/. For example, **sue** /su/: past tense and past participle **sued** /sud/; **play** /plei/: past tense and past participle **played** /pleid/; **beg** /beg/: past tense and past participle **begged** /begd/; **judge** /dʒədʒ/: past tense and past participle **judged** /dʒədʒd/.

If the uninflected verb ends in /p, k, f, θ, s, ʃ, tʃ/ these inflections are pronounced /-t/. For example, **stop** /stap/: past tense and past participle **stopped** /stapt/; **miss** /mɪs/: past tense and past participle **missed** /mɪst/.

If the uninflected verb ends in /t, d/ these inflections are pronounced /-ɪd/. For example, **wait** /weit/: past tense and past participle **waited** /ˈweitɪd/; **prod** /prad/: past tense and past participle **prodded** /ˈpradɪd/.

An exception to these rules is the tendency to use the /-ɪd/ pronunciation, regardless of what sound the uninflected verb ends in,

whenever the *-d/-ed* inflection is followed by *-ly* or *-ness*. For example, *He fixed* /fɪkst/ *his gaze on the object*, and *He regarded it with a fixed* /fɪkst/ *stare*, but *He stared at it fixedly* /ˈfɪksɪdli/, and *The fixedness* /ˈfɪksɪdnɪs/ *of his gaze showed his feelings*. However, some educated Americans do say /ˈfɪkstli/ and /ˈfɪkstnɪs/ in these cases.

Such pairs as **blessed** /blest/ (past tense and past participle) but /ˈblesɪd/ (adjective), **learned** /lərnd/ (past tense and past participle) but /ˈlərnɪd/ (adjective) are firmly established in English. Because the /-ɪd/ forms always function as full adjectives, they are treated either as derivatives or independent headwords in the Dictionary.

3. *Comparative and superlative inflections*. The regular comparative inflection is *-er* (*-ier*) and the regular superlative inflection is *-est* (*-iest*).

The inflection *-er* is pronounced /-ər/, *-ier* is /-iər/, *-est* is /-ɪst/, and *-iest* is /-ɪɪst/. For example, **new** /nu/: comparative **newer** /ˈnuər/, superlative **newest** /ˈnuɪst/; **old** /ould/: comparative **older** /ˈouldər/, superlative **oldest** /ˈouldɪst/; **happy** /ˈhæpi/: comparative **happier** /ˈhæpiər/, superlative **happiest** /ˈhæpiɪst/.

In general, the pronunciation of inflected forms is given in the Dictionary only if the forms do not follow the ordinary rules, e.g., **basis** (*pl* **bases** /ˈbeiˌsiz/); **read** (*pt*, *pp* **read** /red/).

Contractions In spoken English, there are certain words which are given strong (primary/secondary) stress only when they occur at the end of a sentence or need special emphasis. Otherwise they are spoken without stress. These words, all of which are only one syllable long and have primarily a grammatical function, include the articles and some personal pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and inflected forms of the auxiliary verbs. As part of this variation in stress, many of these words have two pronunciations: a *strong form*, used when the word is stressed, and a *weak form*, used when it is unstressed. In the strong form, the vowels and consonants are pronounced in full, while in the weak form many vowels are reduced to /ə/ and some consonants may be omitted, especially /h/. Examples of such words are **and, he, of**, which have the strong forms /ˈænd, ˈhi, ˈɔv/ and the weak forms /ən, (h)i, ə(v)/. In this Dictionary, both strong and weak forms are given in the phonetic information in the entry for words having these forms. It is important to consult this information, since details of usage vary from word to word. For example, the weak form of **he** is /hi/ at the beginning of a sentence, /i/ elsewhere, while weak forms of **have/has/had** and **do/does/did** exist for these when used as auxiliary verbs, but not when used as main verbs, e.g., *He might have* /əv/ *gone*, but *He might have* /ˈhæv/ *time*. In informal style, this weakening process is carried still further when forms of the verb **be**, the auxiliary verbs, and the word **not** follow certain other words. In such cases, the second word forms a *contraction* with the preceding one, which is to say that the two are spoken as a single unit. These contractions are also made in writing which is intended to reflect informal speech, for example in the direct speech of plays, novels, and short stories, and they are also often used in personal correspondence. In writing contractions, the weak forms are joined to the preceding word, with an apostrophe used in place of omitted