

**THE  
CASSELL  
THESAURUS**

# **THE CASSELL THESAURUS**

**A comprehensive guide to  
synonymy and nuance**

~~edited by~~  
**S. I. Hayakawa**

revised by  
**P. J. Fletcher**

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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

### Using the Index

To find a word you want turn first to the Index, beginning on p. 679. If the word is printed in small capital letters, as in the case of *COURAGE*, for example, that word appears as the head word of an essay. The page number on which that essay begins appears to the right of the word. You may then turn directly to the indicated page in the main section of the book. You will find *COURAGE*, for example, as the head word of an essay comparing *backbone*, *fortitude*, *grit*, *guts*, *nerve*, *pluck*, and *resolution* beginning on page 126. More often, however, the word you are interested in will *not* be a head word, but will appear in an essay listed under another word. In that event the Index will cross-refer you to the head word, printed in small capital letters, under which the word you are seeking will appear. Suppose you want to find *indigent*. In the Index you will find: *indigent* *PENILESS* 418. This means that *indigent* is discussed in an essay under the head word *PENILESS* beginning on page 418.

Some words, like *good*, have so many important meanings that they must be included in several essays that discuss different aspects of meaning. In such cases the nature of the head word will suggest which meaning is discussed. For example:

good *BENEFICIAL* 43  
good *OBEDIENT* 388

Head words are always identified by part of speech when ambiguity would otherwise result. For example:

ACT (n) 5  
deluge *FLOOD* (v) 215  
DEMAND (v) 144  
retreat *ESCAPE* (v) 188

In a few cases the same word appears as the head word of more than one essay; the Index distinguishes between such essays by listing either the part of speech or, if both are of the same part of speech, by the alphabetically-first word discussed in each essay after the head word. For example:

PLAIN (n) 430  
PLAIN (adj) 431  
REQUEST (n) 488  
REQUEST (v) 489  
STOP (arrest) 572  
STOP (cease) 573

### Finding the Word You Want

To aid you in locating the word you want, the head word of each essay is printed in large, boldface type above the beginning of its essay. The other words discussed are printed in small, boldface type beside their respective head word. The first paragraph of each essay begins without indentation to mark off even more clearly where each essay starts.

As a further aid in finding the word you want, the first occurrence of the synonyms discussed within each essay appears in prominent boldface type, subsequent occurrences in italic type. Thus if you are looking for a particular word, for example *perennial* in the essay **PERMANENT**, you needn't read about *lasting*, *enduring*, *perpetual*, and *durable*—all discussed first—in order to get to it. Just scan the boldface words until you find what you are looking for. Of course, we hope you will more often want to read the entire essay, but we have made the Thesaurus flexible enough to be useful for quick reference as well.

### Cross-References

Cross-references at the end of essays, as in the Index, are always made to the head words of other entries, and always appear in small capital letters. We have used cross-references liberally in the hope of stimulating the reader's interest to turn to other related essays. Cross-references, therefore, do not necessarily refer to a word of the same part of speech as the head word of the essay under which they appear. For instance, under **SARCASTIC**, an adjective, cross-references are made to **CONTEMPTUOUS** (an adjective), **RIDICULE** (a noun), **SCOFF** (a verb), and **SOUR** (an adjective). Cross-references are thus not intended to refer you to other synonyms or near-synonyms, but are used as a means of suggesting relationships that may interest you. Sometimes these relationships are close enough to approximate synonymy, as in the cross-reference to **CLEAN** from **SANITARY**; at other times, the relationship is one of nuance or similarity of usual context and is very far removed from synonymy, as in the cross reference to **MOUNTAIN** and **SHEEP** from **ROUGH**.

### Antonyms

Not every essay suggests a set of antonyms, and we have not attempted to force lists of antonyms into positions where they do not fit. Essays like **CHARACTERISTIC**, **ROTATE**, and **SAMPLE** can have antonyms. Antonyms are listed at the end of those essays to which they apply following the indented word *antonyms*. The antonym lists serve a different function from that of the cross-references, and the treatment accorded them is therefore different. Antonym lists are commonly used by people searching for a word rather than a meaning. Antonym lists should therefore be of the same part of speech as that of the words discussed in the essay under which they appear. You will note that some antonyms are listed in small type whereas others are listed in small capital letters: for example, the antonyms of **SAVOURY** are listed as **BLAND**, insipid, tasteless. Words

listed in small capital letters are head words, and rather than repeat every word discussed in the essay designated, we refer the reader to the essay itself. The antonyms printed in small type are either not included in the work or are not included in a sense antonymic to that of the head word under which they appear. For example, 'graceful' and 'sure' are listed in small type among the antonyms of CLUMSY, even though 'graceful' is discussed under EXQUISITE and 'sure' is a head word in its own right. But since all the words discussed at EXQUISITE and SURE are not antonyms to CLUMSY, we cannot fairly refer the reader to these essays. Thus whenever an antonym appears in small capital letters, you can be sure that each word discussed under that head word is also an antonym.

The Editors,  
London

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## A

**ABSORB assimilate digest imbibe incorporate ingest**

These words, all relatively formal, indicate the taking in of one thing by another. *Absorb* is slightly more informal than the others and has, perhaps, the widest range of uses. In its most restricted sense, it suggests the taking in or soaking up specifically of liquids: the ink *absorbed* by the blotter. In more general uses, it may imply the thoroughness of the action: not merely to read the chapter, but to *absorb* its meaning. Or it may stress the complete disappearance of the thing taken in within the encompassing medium: once-lovely countryside *absorbed* by urban sprawl. *Ingest* refers literally to the action of taking into the mouth, as food or drugs, for later absorption by the body. Figuratively it designates any taking in, and suggests the receptivity necessary for such a process: too tired to *ingest* even one more idea from the complicated philosophical essay he was reading. To *digest* is to alter food chemically in the digestive tract so that it can be *absorbed* into the bloodstream. In other uses, *digest* is like *absorb* in stressing thoroughness, but is even more emphatic. [You may completely *absorb* a stirring play in one evening, but you will be months *digesting* it.]

*Assimilate* is even more emphatic about the thoroughness of the taking in than either *absorb* or *digest*—in both its specific physiological and general uses. Physiologically, food is first *digested*, then *absorbed* by the bloodstream, and then *assimilated* bit by bit in each cell the blood passes. In more general uses, *assimilate*, unlike previous words, often implies a third agent beside the absorber and the absorbed—an agent that directs this process: the architect who *assimilates* his building to its environment. The process, furthermore, often implies the complete transformation of the absorbed into the absorbing medium. *Assimilate* also suggests a much slower process than *digest* and certainly than *absorb*, which can be nearly instantaneous: It would take the city generations to *assimilate* the newcomers into the patterns of a strange life.

*Incorporate* is the only word here that does not have a specific use pertaining to the taking in of liquids or of food, meaning literally 'to embody'. It compares to that aspect of *assimilate* which stresses the loss of separate identity for the absorbed quantity: *incorporating* your proposals into a new system that will satisfy everyone. It is unlike *assimilate* in lacking that word's suggestion of necessarily careful, time-consuming thoroughness.

*Imbibe*, while capable of uses comparable to those for *assimilate*, is mainly rooted still to its specific use for the taking in of liquids. Even this use, and certainly any others, now sound slightly archaic and excessively formal: Do you *imbibe* alcoholic beverages? See EAT.

antonyms: disgorge, disperse, dissipate, eject, emit, exude.

**ABSTAIN forbear refrain**

*Abstain* means to withhold oneself from an action or self-indulgence. [There were six votes in favour, two against, and two *abstaining*; He *abstained* from drinking.] *Refrain* has to do with withholding an action temporarily, or checking a momentary desire: She *refrained* from scolding her child until the company left. To *forbear*, in its intransitive sense, is to exercise self-control,



## absurd

often out of motives or patience or charity. [Though impatient, the customer *forbore* to upbraid the harassed sales assistant; The teacher *forbore* to report the child's misbehaviour to his parents.] See FORGO, FORSWEAR.

antonyms: BEGIN, PERMIT.

## ABSURD farcical foolish irrational ludicrous preposterous ridiculous senseless silly unreasonable

*Absurd* means opposed to reason or truth, and may be applied to that which is grossly, and sometimes grotesquely, inconsistent with common sense or experience. *Preposterous* denotes a great contrariness to nature, reason, or common sense, and is used to describe that which is outrageously *absurd*. *Ridiculous* refers to that which is *absurd* in a way that invites ridicule or mockery. [It is *absurd* to predict that the sun will not rise tomorrow; It is *preposterous* that virtue should go unrewarded while vice goes unpunished; It is *ridiculous* to judge a foreign culture by its plumbing.]

*Farcical* and *ludicrous* are applied to that which is *absurd* in an amusing way. *Farcical* indicates a humorous distortion of fact, convention, or reason. *Ludicrous* implies playful absurdity, but may also be synonymous with *ridiculous* in describing something that is greeted with scorn or derision. [The *farcical* introduction of a talking horse gave the play its flavour; The *ludicrous* antics of the harlequins delighted the audience; The speaker made a series of *ludicrous* mistakes which were rewarded with hoots and catcalls.]

*Foolish*, *senseless*, and *silly* add a suggestion of folly or even of a trivial intellect to their synonymy with *absurd*. [To buy stock in a company that is booming but destined to be short-lived is a *foolish* investment; To beat a dead horse is *senseless*; To make unsupportable claims is *silly* affectation.]

*Unreasonable* and *irrational* mean contrary to reason, the difference between them being the fact that *unreasonable* implies a bias or intent to go wrong and *irrational* suggests an uncontrollable lack of understanding. [It is *unreasonable* to maintain a geocentric theory of the universe; It is *irrational* to expect an adult reaction from a child.] See HUMOROUS.

antonyms: consistent, logical, rational, reasonable, sagacious, SENSIBLE.

## ACCOMPANY attend chaperon convoy escort

*Accompany* and *attend* are alike in meaning to go with, but each suggests a different relationship between persons. We *accompany* our equals, and *attend* those to whom we would show courtesy or to whom we are subordinate. When they refer to things, *accompany* and *attend* mean to be present with as a result of. [A sense of accomplishment often *accompanies* hard effort; A feeling of depression *attends* many illnesses.]

*Escort* and *convoy* are closely related, but *escort* is the broader term. To *convoy* means to *accompany* ships or vehicles for protection, while to *escort* is to go with them, or with persons, either for the purpose of guarding or as a mark of courtesy. Militarily, a land movement is *escorted*, a sea movement *convoyed*. During World War II, merchant ships were *convoyed* across the Atlantic by the Navy. A troop march may be *escorted* by armed vehicles. As a mark of courtesy, a ship making its maiden voyage is *escorted* by other craft in or out of the harbour. A boy is expected to *escort* his girl-friend to the door.

*Chaperon* means to *accompany*, but carries the implication of guidance or supervision in the interests of protection or propriety. A young girl may be *chaperoned* by her aunt while travelling abroad. See GUIDE.

antonyms: LEAVE.

**ACCOMPLICE** abettor accessory confederate conspirator  
plotter

*Accomplice* and *confederate* both denote a person who is associated with another in the perpetration of a crime, whether the association is limited to the planning stages or is extended to its entire execution. Thus, an *accomplice* or *confederate* may, but need not necessarily, be present at the scene of the crime. [The role of the murderer's *accomplice* was that of weapon procurer; Although Fredericks planned the theft, it was one of his *confederates* who actually entered the house and stole the jewels.]

An *abettor* is an *accomplice* or *confederate* who is present and who participates in the execution of a crime. A look-out is an *abettor* in a bank robbery.

*Accessory* is the legal term for an *accomplice* who helps a felon without being present at the scene of the crime. If he helps the felon's preparations, he is an *accessory* before the fact; if he helps the felon to escape punishment once the crime has been committed, he is an *accessory* after the fact.

*Conspirator* and *plotter* refer to persons who are involved in a secret or underhanded agreement to do some evil act. *Conspirators* are those who take part in a *conspiracy*, which is a legal term denoting an intention to violate the law; in general use, it is applied to major crimes and even more particularly to reason. *Plotters* are implicated in an activity which has a sinister purpose, but which, even though it is difficult to plan and execute, may be petty in scope. See ASSISTANT, ASSOCIATE, HELP.

antonym s: OPPONENT.

**ACCUMULATE** amass collect gather hoard

*Accumulate* and *amass* both mean to pile up by successive addition. To *accumulate* is to heap or pile up or bring together by degrees or by regular additions; to *amass* is to bring together a great quantity and usually suggests great value. A housewife may *accumulate* trading stamps. A speculator may try to *amass* great wealth; an army may *amass* armaments for a final push. *Collect* and *gather* are interchangeable in the sense of bringing together into one place or into a group. *Collect*, however, suggests discriminating selection in a way that *gather* does not: to *collect* stamps as a hobby but with the idea of reselling them later at a profit; to *gather* a large bunch of wildflowers along a country road. *Hoard* means to *gather* and store for the sake of accumulation. It always connotes a selfish desire to keep permanently or for future use and suggests secrecy in the process. [A miser *hoards* his money; In wartime, individuals may *hoard* scarce items.] See PILE.

antonyms: disperse, dissipate, scatter, spend, squander, waste.

**ACCUMULATION** aggregation collection conglomeration

All these words, as here considered, mean a mass of things that come or are brought together. They all imply that the things are neither merged with one another nor united organically in the resultant mass. *Accumulation* means that the things have come together by a series of additions rather than all at once. It often implies that the things are of the same kind, such as the *accumulation* of dust on surfaces, or of money in banks, and does not imply any coherence or organization in the mass gathered.

*Collection* and *accumulation* are often used interchangeably, but *collection* frequently implies a high degree of selection and organization in the mass collected: An *accumulation* of many specimens is needed when one is preparing a scientific *collection*.

*Aggregation* always denotes a mass brought together that forms, in some

## accurate

sense, a coherent whole, but one that has a lesser degree of organization than does a *collection*: An industrial empire is often an *aggregation* of unrelated enterprises.

**Conglomeration** implies that many different and sometimes even incongruous things are brought together from widely scattered sources or regions: The population of New York is a *conglomeration* of many different kinds of people from various countries and cultures. See **PILE**.

## ACCURATE correct exact nice precise right true

*Accurate*, *exact*, *precise*, and *true*, as here considered, agree in implying close conformity to an objective standard. *Accurate* suggests that there are degrees of conformity to such a standard and stresses the painstaking care necessary for the attainment of fidelity to truth or fact: It took a week of investigation to get an even reasonably *accurate* account of the accident. *Exact* emphasizes extreme accuracy in measurable quantities and qualities: The *exact* wave length assigned to a transmitting station must always be maintained. *Precise* stresses great accuracy in regard to minute details: The assembling of the parts of a watch must be *precise*. *True*, as here considered, implies absolute accuracy, particularly in reproductions of an original: a *true* copy of a birth certificate.

**Correct** suggests the absence of error or fault and a conformity to some standard. It is more general than the other words in this group because it applies to such things as taste and fashion as well as to truth or fact: the *correct* dress for a formal dinner. **Right** is largely interchangeable with *correct*, but often adds a hint of moral approval: the *right* course of action.

**Nice**, in this sense, meaning a high or even an inordinate degree of precision or exactness, is passing out of usage, but it is still encountered in formal writing. See **DUPLICATE**, **GENUINE**.

antonyms: erroneous, false, inaccurate, incorrect, inexact, wrong.

## ACCUSE arraign charge impeach incriminate indict

These words all mean to declare a person to be guilty of some offence or shortcoming. *Accuse* is the most general word, and may be used in formal or informal, official or personal, contexts. A motorist may stand before a court *accused* of dangerous driving; a neighbour may *accuse* a man of playing his radio too loud.

**Charge**, in this context, means to *accuse* formally, usually before a court; by extension, it means to *accuse* informally of a violation of some accepted standard. [The candidate *charged* his opponent with evasion of the basic issues.]

**Incriminate** means to *charge* a person with a crime directly, or to involve him in a crime by damaging evidence. In popular use, the latter is the more usual meaning: He was *incriminated* by an eye witness who placed him at the scene of the crime.

**Indict** and **arraign** are legal terms. *Indict* is to *charge* officially and to make subject to an appearance before a jury or judge. In an extended sense, *indict* is to *charge* unofficially but publicly: to *indict* a school of writing or painting as being obscurantist. To *arraign*, legally, is to call an *indicted* person before a court for trial; by extension, to *arraign* is to call publicly but unofficially a person or a movement to stand judgment before public opinion or some other standard.

Technically, **impeach** means to *arraign* before the House of Lords as judges a person accused of treason or any other crime of misdemeanour, the

## acknowledge

House of Commons acting as the prosecution. There has been no such prosecution for well over a century, and so the technical use is rapidly becoming historical. By extension, to *impeach* is to discredit or call into question: to *impeach* a witness; to *impeach* a person's motives. See *DISAPPROVAL*, *REBUKE*.

antonyms: EXONERATE, PARDON.

## ACKNOWLEDGE admit concede confess

These words agree in meaning to accept openly, though with some reluctance, the truth or existence of a fact, condition, etc. One *acknowledges* something embarrassing or awkward, and usually not voluntarily; more often, the acknowledgment is extracted from one more or less unwillingly: The general *acknowledged* that the war had not been going as well as expected, but he *affirmed* that a shift in strategy would enhance the prospects of victory.

*Admit* is a bold acknowledgment of implication in something one has formerly tended to deny or to equivocate about: He *admitted* under questioning that he was in the service of a foreign power, but denied that he was guilty of espionage. One *concedes*, usually because of overwhelming evidence, something which he has been very reluctant to *admit*. [He had no choice but to *concede* that he had been guilty of bad judgment; In the face of the disastrous military battle, they *conceded* that victory was no longer attainable, and agreed to a negotiated surrender.] *Confess* is to *admit* guilt, as to a crime, or to *admit* to a shortcoming; to *confess* that he was an accomplice in the robbery; He *confessed* that he had never read any of Shakespeare's plays. See *ASSERT*.

antonyms: CONTRADICT, FORSWEAR.

## ACT action deed exploit feat operation performance

An *act*, in the sense considered here, is something that is done. The *act* may be done by a person, a group, or an impersonal entity, and is not limited by motive, nature, or result. Thus, an *act* of God is a violent outbreak of nature; the *act* of a maniac may endanger the community; the *act* of a philanthropist may enrich it. While *act* refers to something that is accomplished, *action* refers to the accomplishing of it or the process by which it is accomplished: the *action* of acid on metal.

*Deed*, while sometimes used to connote any *act*, good or bad, big or small, is usually synonymous with *exploit* and *feat* in meaning an achievement of great courage, nobility, intelligence, strength, or skill. An *exploit* is often a physical *act*; discovering a continent, scaling a high mountain, and descending to the ocean floor are all *exploits*. A *feat* may also be a physical *act*, but it applies to mental *acts* as well. [Formulating the General Theory of Relativity was a prodigious mental *feat*; Playing several chess games simultaneously while blindfolded is a remarkable and impressive *feat*.] A *deed* is generally an *act* that is noteworthy for its difficulty or nobility. [The labors of Hercules were *deeds* of courage and ingenuity; A good *deed* may range from endowing a university to helping an old lady cross the street.]

*Operation* and *performance* in this context can be synonymous with *act* or *action*, but are usually considered to be combinations of *acts* or the manner in which they are carried out. A military *operation* is a series of co-ordinated individual and group *acts*; the *performance* of an employee is the manner in which he carries out the *acts* that are part of his job's routine. See *METHOD*, *PERFORM*.

## activity

### ACTIVITY **bustle commotion stir to-do**

*Activity* means the state of being in motion, or the expenditure of energy. *Activity* is a broad word, applicable to physical or mental exertions or pursuits by a person or a group, and is often used to convey the idea of a number of separate simultaneous or successive operations: the *activity* of the heart; a busy week filled with social *activities*.

**Bustle, commotion, stir, and to-do** all mean a feverish, noisy, or excited *activity* by either an individual or a group. *Bustle* suggests busyness, *activity* with a purpose: the *bustle* on the floor of the Stock Exchange. *Commotion* suggests excitement and noisy disorganization: the *commotion* in a schoolroom during the teacher's absence. *Stir* suggests excited or lively movement: the *stir* aroused in the stands by a brilliant move on the field. *To-do* hints at unnecessary or uncalled-for excitement: the *to-do* generated by the secretary's leaving without a word to anybody. See **ACT**.

*antonyms*: inactivity, inertia, inertness, laziness, **SLOTH**.

### ACUMEN **acuity insight perception**

These words all refer to a highly developed mental ability to see or understand what is not obvious. *Acumen* has to do with keenness of intellect, and implies an uncommon quickness and discrimination of mind. It requires *acumen* to solve an intricate problem in human relationships, or to emerge unscathed from a venture in the stock market.

**Insight and perception** mean the power to recognize the hidden springs of behaviour or the true nature or cause of a situation or condition: A psychiatrist's *insight* into human behaviour may uncover the underlying cause of a boy's delinquency; a doctor's *perception* may recognize a patient's complaints as symptoms of a psychic disorder. *Perception* in its basic sense applies to anything recognized or understood by the senses, and in its extended sense to anything recognized or understood by the mind, thus suggesting a likeness between mind and the senses. *Perception* therefore suggests a view of the mind as a keenly receptive but nonetheless passive instrument, sensitive to very slight stimuli. *Insight*, on the other hand, is consistent with a view of the mind as an active agent, seeking and sifting ideas and probabilities as well as the evidence of sensations. In most contexts *insight* implies a more profound use of intellect and wisdom than does *perception*; *insight* suggests a knowledge of the inner character or essence of a thing, whereas *perception* relies primarily on the sharpness or *acuity* of one's senses.

*Acuity* means sharpness or keenness, and is applied exclusively to *perception*: visual *acuity*; The intelligence test was used as a basis for judging his mental *acuity*. See **KEEN, SENSATION, VISION, WISDOM**.

*antonyms*: bluntness, dullness, obtuseness, stupidity.

### ADAPT **accommodate adjust conform fit reconcile**

*Adapt* and *adjust* mean to change someone or something to suit new circumstances or a different environment. *Adapt* involves considerable change to meet new requirements, while *adjust* implies a minor change, as in the alignment of parts: to *adapt* a novel for the stage; to *adjust* a motor; to *adjust* the differences between two parties in a dispute. *Adapt* emphasizes the purpose for which the change must be made: The shrewd politician *adapts* his speech to suit the interests of his audience. *Adjust* is also used to mean to *adapt* oneself to a changed environment: Astronauts in flight must *adjust* to weightlessness.

**Conform** as here considered, means to correspond to a model or pattern: The building must *conform* to the blueprints. In a commonly used extended sense, *conform* means to adhere or *adjust* to conventional behaviour: When travelling in a foreign country, it is wise to *conform* to the habits of the natives. This last example may also be recast reflexively: to *conform* oneself to the habits of the natives. To *fit* something is to *adapt* it to a purpose or use: A prudent man *fits* his standard of living to his budget.

**Accommodate** and **reconcile** are similar to *adapt* in meaning to change something or oneself in acknowledgment of an external condition. [A Westerner visiting the Far East must *accommodate* himself to habits of life that may seem very strange to him; A man following a military career must *reconcile* himself to long absences from his family.] *Reconcile* implies an *accommodation* not without misgivings or resentment; one *reconciles* oneself to certain conditions because the alternatives are even less palatable. *Accommodate*, on the other hand, conveys no such connotation, but suggests that the adjustment will make one's own lot easier because it will gratify others. See CHANGE.

**antonyms:** derange, disarrange, discompose, disjoin, dislocate, displace, dissent, misfit, resist.

## ADAPTABLE adjustable elastic flexible yielding

These words suggest the ease with which something will respond to an external force without breaking. *Adaptable* is the most general and the most abstract, suggesting the favourable quality of an ingenious or practical ability to alter habit as a response to changed circumstances: The ice ages exterminated many less *adaptable* species. *Yielding* is nearly as abstract as *adaptable* but more readily suggests an unfavourable passivity or unassertiveness than a favourable ability to improvise responses to challenges: the familiar stereotype that makes all women out to be helpless and *yielding*.

**Flexible** and **elastic** have concrete applications to physical objects, in which case they suggest something with spring to it or something that will quickly resume its shape after being distorted. *Elastic* suggests stretching, as of a hand or membrane; *flexible* suggests bending, as of a rod or tube. **Adjustable** is applied to objects that can be manually altered to suit different uses or purposes: An *adjustable* car seat slides backwards or forwards to accommodate the driver.

Used in the sense of *adaptable*, *elastic* suggests the ability to recover quickly in the face of a threat or upset: a man who was amazingly *elastic* and imperturbable under pressure. *Elastic* can also refer to a projected set of requirements, rules, or figures when they are open to revision in the light of experience: an *elastic* budget that allows for unexpected outlays for new equipment; *elastic*, sensible rules drawn up by the students themselves. *Flexible*, in this context, is closer in meaning to *adaptable* than any other word here. It does not, however, necessarily suggest a permanent adjustment to change but rather momentary shifts of position to maintain balance: a society so *flexible* in the face of new influences as to lack unity or purpose. See MALLEABLE, SUPPLE.

**antonyms:** CLUMSY, dilatory, fixed, inflexible, rigid, set, sluggish.

## ADD affix annex append attach

**Add**, the most general word in this group, means to join or unite so as to increase the importance, size, quantity, or scope of something: to *add* a new line of merchandise to one's goods; to *add* a new wing to a building; to *add*

## addition

five new salesmen to a staff; to *add* a touch of levity to an otherwise solemn speech.

**Attach**, as here considered, means to connect or join on as a part, and is close in some contexts to **append**: to *attach* a stipulation to a contract; to *append* a query to a manuscript. *Append* emphasizes that the addition is subordinate or minor in relation to the original work. Both words are formal, but *attach* has a legalistic ring to it lacking in *append*: to *attach* a rider to a proposal; to *append* a footnote. Note that *add* could be used in place of either of these words, but would make the tone less formal and therefore less impressive.

**Affix** means to fix or attach to: to *affix* a seal to a document. *Affix* is appropriate only in very formal contexts, as in the description of state affairs: The Heads of State *affixed* their signatures to a mutual defence treaty.

**Annex** means to add something supplementary. It implies not only that the addition is a subordinate part, but often that the addition remains distinct: to *annex* an adjoining territory; to *annex* a building to an older one. See ENLARGE.

*antonyms*: abstract, deduct, LESSEN, REDUCE, subtract.

## ADDITION accessory adjunct appendage appendix appurtenance attachment supplement

These words all refer to parts of a whole, either integral or incidental. *Addition* and *supplement* share one sense in which the part and whole being joined are alike in kind, so that only an increase in quantity results. [The new members will be a welcome *addition* to the club; A vitamin *supplement* is not necessary for the average diet.] Both words have uses, on the other hand, in which the part remains distinguishable from and subordinate to the whole. [What a charming *addition* the sun-lounge makes to your house; The paper-covered book of tests was a *supplement* to the pupils' mathematics textbook.] A *supplement* can also be a standard or special section of a newspaper: the Sunday *supplement* on the autumn fashions. **Appendix**, like *supplement*, can refer to a part of a book, but is more often bound with the book itself. Neither of these are essential to the book's completeness, although both would offer additional details on given material.

**Appendage** refers to a more integral part of a whole than do any of the other terms. It is especially used in the life sciences to indicate the limbs or extremities of a plant or animal. No one except such a scientist, however, is likely—even in the most formal of contexts—to use *appendage* in preference to limb, branch, arm, leg, tail, or whatever. Biologists themselves, in fact, can be every bit as exact and certainly more succinct in speaking of a monkey's *tail* rather than its caudal *appendage*. In other uses of this word, the subordination of the part to the whole is emphasized. Such uses may be rather stiff except when a note of mockery is conveyed. [It was apparent to everyone that the husband had become a mere *appendage* to his wealthy wife.]

**Appurtenance** and **adjunct** both refer to a part that becomes a valuable *addition* to a whole, though not essential to it. *Appurtenance* has a specific legal sense of an incidental property right that goes along with a major right, such as the right of way to a building. The sense of a gratuitous advantage pervades its other meanings as well: He was unusual in considering her beauty as an *appurtenance* to her vigorous mind, and not vice versa. In *adjunct*, the separateness of the added part is stressed: Memorizing is only an *adjunct* to real education, not its basis.

**Attachment** and **accessory** refer to parts that are neither essential to nor fused with the whole they complement. An *attachment* increases the utility of the original whole for which it is specifically designed, although its use is optional: If we had a flash-bulb *attachment*, we could also take pictures at

## **adequate**

night. One meaning of *accessory* is identical to that of *attachment*, as in car *accessories*. Another sense of *accessory* points to its enhancing of the beauty, rather than the usefulness, of the whole to which it is added: the tastefully chosen *accessories* that dramatize the simplest dress or suit. See **EXTRANEOUS**.

*antonyms*: abstraction, deletion, omission, subtraction.

## **ADEQUATE enough satisfactory sufficient**

These words mean equal to what is required or expected, but not exceeding it by much. *Adequate* means suitable to the case or occasion: an *adequate* supply of fuel for the winter months. Like **satisfactory**, *adequate* may apply to quality as well as quantity: an *adequate* performance, but nothing to rave about; His knowledge of French was *adequate* for the job, although he was not fluent in the language. *Satisfactory* implies a standard to which something is being compared or against which it is being tested. [The child's reading ability was *satisfactory* for his age; The response to our call for financial contributions was wholly *satisfactory*, exceeding our goal by several thousand pounds.]

**Enough** is in some contexts interchangeable with *adequate*, but is used only to indicate amount or degree, not quality: *enough* or *adequate* salesmen to cover the area—but: salesmen who were *adequate* to their task.

**Sufficient** implies a quantity or number *adequate* for a particular need or to fulfill a particular purpose: Our military response to the aggressive act was limited but *sufficient* to show our determination. Unlike *satisfactory*, it does not imply measuring up to a standard. It emphasizes instead the end being sought; the degree to which something contributes to the achievement of that end is what makes it *sufficient* or insufficient. See **PLENTIFUL**.

*antonyms*: **DEFICIENT**, inadequate, insufficient, unqualified, unsuitable.

## **ADVICE counsel recommendation**

*Advice* and **counsel** mean an opinion or a judgment given by one person to another urging him either to do something or not to do it. *Advice*, the more general term, may be given on serious matters or relatively trivial ones, but *counsel* suggests solemn *advice* given in an official or authoritative capacity about a matter of some importance, at least to the person seeking it: to give *advice* to one's son on the choice of a career; a woman seeking *advice* on hair styling; a young houseman who profited from the *counsel* of an experienced surgeon. *Advice*, unless qualified by an adjective suggesting otherwise, often implies that the adviser has a direct and more or less personal interest in the person advised; the subject of *advice* is thus often personal in nature. *Counsel*, on the other hand, suggests a detached, impersonal view on the part of the person giving it; and the subject of *counsel* is often of a business nature.

**Recommendation**, in this sense, suggests *advice* given on the basis of one's own experience, and expresses a stronger, more positive endorsement of a particular course than *advice*. One's *advice* may be to choose the lesser of two evils; a *recommendation* implies that one course is distinctly favourable and ought to be pursued on its own merits: to read a new book on the *recommendation* of a friend. See **HELP**.

## **AFRAID aghast alarmed anxious apprehensive fearful frightened scared terror-stricken**

*Afraid* means showing fear. When used by itself, no particular degree of fear is indicated. [She's *afraid* of dogs, even of puppies; We are *afraid* to walk in



## aggression

the park at night since the woman was killed there.] In most uses, being *afraid* is personal, and the fear has to do with bodily harm. *Afraid* is also used in polite discourse to indicate nothing more than mild concern: I'm *afraid* I'm a bit late for my appointment. Sometimes this use conceals great fear: If our present policy is continued, I am *afraid* that war is inevitable.

**Frightened** and **scared** often suggest fear of bodily harm, but not invariably; both may be used to describe vague fears of unknown source. [When the lights went out I was *scared*; She's always *frightened* when she's alone in the house.] *Frightened* has a more genteel sound than *scared*, but both apply strictly to physically felt fear, even if the causes are emotional or imaginary.

**Anxious** means tense and worried. **Fearful** may mean full of terror or dread, but more often means merely **apprehensive**—that is, anticipating danger, failure, or trouble. In the latter sense, *fearful* shares with *anxious* the suggestion that the worry stems from inner concern without much relevance to external conditions, and is in this sense unreasonable. *Apprehensive* suggests awareness of impending danger caused by circumstances, and does not depend so much on one's peculiar nature or habitual state of mind. [She was *anxious* about her daughter being out so late at night; The playwright was *fearful* that the opening night would be a failure; a shareholder who was *apprehensive* about his holdings during the recession; We are frankly *fearful* of another depression unless the economy improves radically in the next few months.]

**Aghast**, **alarmed**, and **terror-stricken** are applied to strong feelings of fear or fright. *Aghast* means *afraid* or *frightened* to the point of shock. A man waking up in a burning house will be *aghast* at the thought that his family may be in grave danger. *Alarmed* means suddenly and sharply *afraid* or *frightened*. Parents will be *alarmed* by a sudden outbreak of polio in their community. *Terror-stricken* is the strongest word in this list, and suggests fear so strong that normal reactions are suppressed. A *terror-stricken* person who is drowning may in panic resist the efforts of someone who is trying to save him. See FEAR, FRIGHTEN, INTIMIDATE.

antonyms: audacious, BRAVE, calm, confident, unafraid.

## AGGRESSION assault attack offensive

All these words refer to actions initiated against other persons or groups, especially in wars. *Aggression* means unprovoked belligerent action, as by one nation upon the territory of another. An *attack* is aimed at injuring or destroying others, often by catching them off guard and unprepared. An *assault* is a violent *attack*, so violent that it often implies personal abuse motivated by envy, malice, and the like. Both *attack* and *assault* can be applied to any violent conflict, verbal as well as physical: a personal *assault* on the character of the Prime Minister; a vigorous *attack* on the agricultural policy of the present Government. [We will continue to resist *aggression* because tyranny must be resisted; The *attack* came just before dawn; The final *assaults* were designed to clear the last remnants of enemy resistance.] *Aggression*, as the above example illustrates, is now widely used among diplomats to describe a variety of actions contrary or hostile to the interests of their own countries; *aggression* is thus a linguistic casualty of the cold war, and has lost much of its meaning. *Assault* suggests perhaps more than *attack* the element of suddenness and surprise, as evidenced by the expression 'surprise *attack*'; such emphasis is unnecessary with *assault*. In psychoanalytic usage *aggression* is a tendency toward hostile action.

An *offensive* is a movement or position of offence or *attack*. In some contexts it is interchangeable with *attack*, but in others it applies to a large-scale