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Library Journal

Oxford American Dictionary

Heald Colleges Edition

THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE PAPERBOUND DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN USAGE

Oxford American Dictionary

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Preface

This new member of the Oxford family of dictionaries has been prepared especially for those who need a compact, up-to-date guide to American English. It contains words and phrases likely to be met in reading and everyday life, including a number of slang, informal, and technical words and phrases. Names of states of the United States are included, as well as state capitals, terms used to designate the people of each state, and names of the provinces of Canada. Names of the countries of the world, including those not yet well known, are also given, as are names of the capital cities and the terms used to designate the people of each country.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to members of the Oxford Dictionary Department of the Oxford University Press for assistance of various kinds, particularly to Dr. John B. Sykes, Editor of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary,* Sixth Edition, and to Dr. Robert Burchfield, Chief Editor of the Oxford English dictionaries. We are grateful as well to members of the staff of Oxford University Press in New York, most particularly to Marjorie Mueller, Janice Lorimer, and Cecelia Carollo, for help in all stages of our work.

We wish also to express our gratitude to the many members of The Hudson Group dictionary staff who worked on the *Oxford American Dictionary.* In particular we wish to thank senior staff members: Ernest S. Hildebrand, Jr., Margaret Huffman, Felice Levy, Lawrence T. Lorimer, and Gloria Solomon; associate staff members: Pamela Dupuis, Mary Egner, Richard Ehrlich, Raymond V. Hand, Jr., Joan Lizzio, David H. Scott, and Katherine G. Scott; and assistant staff members: Lee Jayne Ackerman, Christopher Carruth, Hayden Carruth,

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Pleasantville, New York E.E., S.B.F., G.C., and J.M.H.
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Introduction

Spelling

Some words have two or more acceptable spellings in common use, but few variant spellings are given in this dictionary. The aim is not to dictate the use of a particular spelling but to offer a standard form to those who seek one. When two spellings are equally common, the preferred one is given first.

Many spellings commonly used in Canada, such as *centre, cheque, colour,* and *programme,* are not included in this dictionary.

Syllabication

Entry words of more than one syllable are shown with syllables separated by a center dot:

fac·sim·i·le

The center dots show the possible division of a word in writing, typing, or printing. Entry words that are normally hyphenated do not have a center dot where the hyphen occurs. A stress mark appears in place of a center dot after a stressed syllable in a word listed within an entry when its pronunciation clearly resembles that of the word at the head of that entry:

ice′skat·er *n.*

Word Forms

Plurals of nouns, comparatives in *-er* and superlatives in *-est* of adjectives and adverbs, and inflected forms of verbs are

given when they are irregular or when there might be uncertainty about the spelling. Where only two verb forms are given:

ad·mit (ad-mit) *v.* **(ad·mit·ted, ad·mit·ting)**

the first form is both the past tense (he *admitted* it) and the past participle (it was *admitted*). When three forms are given:

come (kum) *v.* **(came, come, com·ing)**
freeze (freez) *v.* **(froze, fro·zen, freez·ing)**

the first is the past tense (he *came;* it *froze*) and the second is the past participle (he had *come;* it had *frozen*).

For certain inflected verb forms, such as *traveled* and *traveling,* some newspapers, journals, and books will use *travelled* and *travelling.* Such variant spellings are not given here.

When an entry word, such as **la·bel** (**lay**-bĕl) *n.,* occurs unchanged as a second part of speech, such as **label** *v.,* the word is given the second or subsequent times without pronunciation or stress.

Symbols

The symbol ▷ introduces usage notes, comments on the meanings of words that are often confused (such as *gourmand* and *gourmet*), grammatical points (such as whether *data* and *media* are singular or plural), and information about the origins of words and phrases (such as *fifth column* and *sour grapes*). The symbol ▷ is also used to indicate that an entry is to be treated as a foreign word:

ibid. *abbr.* ibidem, = in the same book or passage etc. ▷ Latin.

The symbol □ introduces phrases employing the entry word (such as *gain ground* and *gain time* after the definition of *gain*).

Usage Labels

Certain entries in this dictionary carry usage labels. One of these labels, *contemptuous,* indicates that use of the entry word

implies contempt. Where an entry word (or one of its meanings) is labeled *informal,* the word (or the word in one of its meanings) is used in everyday speech but should not be used when speaking or writing formally.

slea·zy (slee-zee) *adj.* **(-zi·er, -zi·est)** *(informal)*
dirty and slovenly.

The label *old use* indicates that the entry word (or one of its meanings) is no longer appropriate in current speech or writing. The label *slang* indicates that the entry word (or one of its meanings) is to be avoided except in extremely informal circumstances.

Proprietary Names

Entries known to be trademarks or proprietary names are so designated in this dictionary. The presence or absence of such designations should not be regarded as affecting the validity of any trademark or proprietary name.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation is shown in parentheses just after the entry word. Syllables are separated by hyphens in pronunciations, and syllables spoken with the most stress are shown in boldface type:

cease·less (**sees**-lis) *adj.*
cloak-and-dag·ger (**klohk**-ăn-**dag**-ĕr)

Only one pronunciation is generally given. When two pronunciations are equally common, the preferred one is given first:

ha·rass (hă-**rass**, **har**-ăs) *v.*

Only the stress is shown for a word listed within an entry when its pronunciation closely resembles that of the word at the head of the entry. In such cases syllables are separated

by center dots, and the stressed syllable is followed by a stress mark:

com′pe·tent·ly *adv.*

Words of one syllable are shown unstressed:

vie (vɪ)

Pronunciation Key

a *as in*	act, bat, marry	ng *as in*	bring, singer, thank
ă *as in*	ago, suitable, metal	o *as in*	odd, box, hot
ah *as in*	father, calm	ŏ *as in*	official, lemon, ardor
ahr *as in*	arm, cart, bar	oh *as in*	oat, bone, sew
air *as in*	air, dare, scary	ohr *as in*	board, four, hoarse, adore
aw *as in*	all, walk, saw		
ay *as in*	age, came, say	oi *as in*	oil, join, toy
b *as in*	boy, habit, rib	oo *as in*	ooze, soon, too, rule
ch *as in*	chin, teacher, beach	oor *as in*	poor, tour, sure
d *as in*	dog, ladder, head	or *as in*	bored, for, horse, adorn
e *as in*	egg, bed, merry	ow *as in*	out, mouse, now
ĕ *as in*	taken, nickel, lawyer	p *as in*	pin, caper, cap
ee *as in*	eat, meat, see, key	r *as in*	red, carry, near
eer *as in*	ear, beer, tier	s *as in*	sit, lesson, nice, cellar
f *as in*	fat, effort, puff	sh *as in*	she, ashen, rush
g *as in*	get, wagon, big	t *as in*	top, butter, hit
h *as in*	hat, ahead	th *as in*	thin, method, path
hw *as in*	wheat, nowhere	*th as in*	this, mother, breathe
i *as in*	if, give, mirror	u *as in*	up, cut, come
ĭ *as in*	pencil, credible	ŭ *as in*	suppose, circus, feature
ɪ *as in*	ice, bite, fire, spy	ur *as in*	her, fir, burn, hurry
j *as in*	jam, magic, edge	uu *as in*	book, full, woman
k *as in*	king, token, back	v *as in*	van, river, give
l *as in*	leg, alley, tell	w *as in*	will, awoke, quick
m *as in*	me, common, him	y *as in*	yes, you
n *as in*	no, manner, tan	z *as in*	zebra, lazy, tease
		zh as in	vision, pleasure

Abbreviations

For the reader's convenience, few abbreviations are used in this dictionary. The following abbreviations are used throughout:

abbr.	abbreviation	*n. fem.*	feminine noun
adj.	adjective	*n. pl.*	plural noun
adv.	adverb	*n. sing.*	singular noun
comb. form	combining form	*pl.*	plural
conj.	conjunction	*poss.*	possessive
fem.	feminine	*pr.*	pronounced
interj.	interjection	*prep.*	preposition
n.	noun	*v.*	verb

Abbreviations in general use (such as ft., R.C.Ch., and etc.) are defined in the dictionary itself.

Publisher's Note

From OED to OAD

To trace the ancestry of this latest Oxford dictionary, one must go back to a little town in southeast Scotland where James Murray was born on February 7, 1837. The son and grandson of tailors, he worked first as a schoolteacher and bank clerk before going on to become one of the greatest lexicographers of all time, the chief editor of the most famous of all dictionaries.

Murray demonstrated a remarkable mind from his earliest days, including an extraordinary capacity for learning languages. He knew the English alphabet by the age of eighteen months, and by the time he was seven he had begun, by comparing various editions of the Bible, to learn Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Chinese. His insatiable hunger for knowledge led him to lifetime interests in geology and botany, and he identified, classified, and analyzed similarities and differences in rocks and plants with passionate exactitude. He simply never stopped learning, as he described in a letter to his son:

> I employed all my leisure time . . . in learning everything that I could, learning as far as I could something about everything that I did not know, while also trying to learn everything that could be known about some things. . . .

Murray became a schoolteacher in 1854, when he was seventeen. From 1870 until 1885 he taught at Mill Hill School, near London. During this time he gained a reputation as a natural scientist and also became a leading scholar of philology, publishing pioneering papers on English dialects and on comparative and historical philology. He received an honorary LL.D from Edinburgh in 1874, entitling him to wear a cap

and gown, which became his daily dress for the rest of his life. He also received honorary degrees from Cape Town, Dublin, and numerous other universities, including Oxford.

In 1857 the English Philological Society had come to a decision that was to prove fateful for Murray. The Society decided that all existing English dictionaries were incomplete and deficient and that the entire English language from Anglo-Saxon times onward must be reexamined. Using volunteer readers, the Society then plunged headlong into an erratic, often frenetic, twenty-two-year period of scouring ancient manuscripts as well as books and other publications from all periods. It amassed a somewhat disorganized collection of 4x6 inch slips, weighing almost two tons, on each of which were recorded one word and a citation. In time the Society, realizing that it was better suited to collecting material than to organizing and editing a dictionary, initiated negotiations with the Oxford University Press to take over the ever expanding, ever more complex project.

In 1878 Murray became president of the Philological Society and the following year, with much trepidation, signed a contract for the Society with the Delegates of the Oxford University Press to compile and edit a dictionary, then called *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles.* The agreement was for a four-volume, 6400-page work to be completed in ten years, in 1889. It had been estimated that the editorial costs would be £6500. Murray soon came to regard the vast treasure of slips collected over the twenty-two-year period as only the nucleus of the work to come. He first had a Scriptorium built for him to work in and to house the citation files and then set about recruiting some 1300 readers throughout the English-speaking world to search out new words and citations systematically. Francis March, then one of America's leading philologists and historical grammarians, was chosen to direct the American readers. Other Americans, such as Fitzedward Hall, who had spent sixteen years teaching Sanskrit and English in India before moving to London and taking a professorship at King's College, were also major contribu-

tors. Thus, almost from the start, American sources have been included in the Oxford citation files, and American scholars have contributed their experience and knowledge.

Murray's dedication to the Dictionary was equaled only by his desire for perfection. He often labored eighty to ninety hours a week, initially with only a handful of helpers, which included members of his family. Before long more than a thousand citation slips were arriving daily at the Scriptorium. Moreover, he sent out each day between thirty and forty of his own handwritten letters to contributors and specialists, asking for specific citations, verification, advice, and additional research. He wrote many letters of encouragement and thanks to contributors, inquiring about their health and, eventually, as various sections of the Dictionary began to appear, apologizing to some for not including all their citations in the published work. This taxing correspondence was in addition to his own research on each entry of the Dictionary, the writing of definitions and, later, the editing, proofreading, and rewriting of the typeset galleys. The last was no small task, as his have the reputation of being the most heavily corrected proofs ever known. Some of the corrections derived from the citations and additional research that continued to pour in after entries were completed, but many others from Murray's insistence that not until he saw material in print could he determine the correct order of the definitions and the best choice of citations.

In 1884 the first 352 pages of the Dictionary, **A-Ant,** were published: half the number of years scheduled for the entire work had yielded the first half of the letter **A.** The Delegates of the Press felt deep concern over the slow progress and made their concern known to Murray. It was agreed that the work might be speeded by appointing additional editors and moving the Dictionary staff to the vicinity of the Press. In 1885, therefore, Murray relinquished his teaching position at Mill Hill School and moved, with his family and his files, to Oxford.

In Murray's garden at Sunnyside, on Banbury Road in Ox-

ford, a new Scriptorium was built; it had to be sunk rather deep in the ground in order to preserve his next-door neighbor's view. The University provided Murray with a staff of eight assistants and asked him to finish the project at the rate of 704 pages a year. In 1887 Henry Bradley was appointed as a second editor with his own staff of assistants. Although **Anta-Battening** was published in 1885, **Battenlie-Bozzom** in 1887, and the final section of **B** in 1888, the actual rate of accomplishment at Oxford did not increase noticeably. The first nine years had produced only the first volume of a work that was ultimately to consist of twelve volumes.

The years of hard work went on. By the last half of the 1890s, the almost yearly crises and recriminations over the time spent on the Dictionary came to an end. By then it was realized that it was not Murray and his staff who were causing the delay but the complexities and perversities of the English language.

William Craigie, a Scotsman like Murray, joined the Dictionary team in 1897 and worked under Murray for four years before becoming a full editor and assuming responsibility for the letter **Q.** In 1914 C. T. Onions, who had been an assistant since 1895, became a full editor, and his article on **super-** and its compounds, rivaling Bradley's 23-page article on **set** and proclaimed a masterpiece, was to be the longest article in the Dictionary. Murray recognized the brilliance of Bradley and Craigie and accepted the two men, yet he was never convinced that anyone else had his complete dedication to the work or his knack of writing definitions. With eighteen assistants, Bradley, Craigie, Onions, and Murray together completed anywhere from fifteen to fifty final pages a month. Murray usually produced two or three times as many pages as the others, whose time was limited by teaching and other editing tasks.

In 1897 the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, marking the completion of Volume III (dedicated to Queen Victoria), gave a dinner in honor of Murray, and at this time several University officials expressed the widespread conviction that, although the project

would always be a drain on Oxford's finances, it was already a national asset. Murray, perhaps incautiously warming to their enthusiasm, predicted that the Dictionary would be completed by 1908, which proved to be just twenty years short of the mark. But the Dictionary was already developing into much more than a national asset of England. Around the world each new installment was eagerly awaited by scholars and word lovers. The parts already issued were becoming the final authority on the English language in law courts, government bureaus, scholarly debates, newspaper offices, and publishing houses.

Murray was knighted in 1908. In 1908, too, while watching Murray ride his tricycle through the streets of Oxford, the famous physician Sir William Osler told a friend: "The University pays me my salary to keep that old man alive till his 80th birthday in 1917 when the Dictionary will be finished." Indeed, Murray was now promising that the Dictionary would be finished on his eightieth birthday, and some of his visitors and correspondents had taken to wishing him well with "May you live to see Zymotic" (the last word in the Dictionary actually turned out to be **Zyxt**).

Murray did not live to see the dictionary completed. Having spent the last thirty-six years of his life on the project, he died after finishing **Trink-Turndown** in July 1915, two years short of his eightieth birthday. Much still remained to be done by Bradley, Craigie, and Onions, but Murray died knowing that the work would be completed and that it could never be—and would never need to be—done again.

The Oxford English Dictionary, as it was eventually named, was finished in 1928. H. L. Mencken had written that spies at Oxford told him the University would celebrate with "boxing matches between the dons . . . and a series of medieval drinking bouts," but the project had taken so long and already become so famous that only a modest celebration was held. The completed work, bound in twelve large volumes, contained 15,487 pages defining every known meaning of 414,825 words with 1,827,306 supporting and illustrative quotations from

Anglo-Saxon times into the twentieth century. The historical record of every meaning, change of meaning, use, spelling, and grammatical form was given for each entry from its first appearance in the written language. The 178 miles of typeset material were completed seventy years after the Dictionary's inception and forty-four years after the first part of **A** had been published. No dictionary in any language has approached it in thoroughness, authority, and wealth of linguistic information. It was considered by many to be the greatest scholarly achievement of all time—and it still is.

When the final twelve-volume set was published, Oxford announced that a Supplement was in progress. That first Supplement, edited by Craigie and Onions, was published in 1933. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary,* which first appeared in 1971, comprises the twelve volumes plus this 1933 Supplement, reproduced micrographically in two volumes and boxed with a magnifying glass. The 1933 Supplement made it clear that constant growth and change in the living English language call for periodic publication of new supplements. Work continues today on "the longest running serial" in the English-speaking world. Under the direction of Dr. Robert Burchfield, the present Oxford dictionary staff of twenty editors and ten researchers—still using readers and advisers from around the world in special subject areas—is at work on a new Supplement.

Burchfield, like Murray before him, is "the man who came to dinner" at Oxford and never left. A New Zealander, he arrived at Oxford as a Rhodes scholar, stayed on to lecture on the English language, and was led into lexicography by C. T. Onions. He was appointed editor of *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* in 1957 and was made Chief Editor of the Oxford English dictionaries in 1971. Following in Murray's footsteps in more ways than one, in 1957 Burchfield thought that the new Supplement would be a one-volume project requiring seven years to complete. Volume I, **A-G,** of this new Supplement was published in 1972 and Volume II, **H-N,** in 1976. In 1980, he and his staff are editing and

reading proofs for Volume III, **O-Scz.** His Supplement is growing into four volumes.

Long before the original twelve-volume *OED* was completed, Oxford lexicographers began to compile shorter dictionaries based on it and using its resources and methods. It was the Fowlers who set the pattern for these shorter Oxford dictionaries. The brothers' association with the Press began shortly after the turn of the century, when they undertook a four-volume translation of the second-century Greek satirist Lucian. Their translation was so meticulous and tasteful that the *New York Times* came to the conclusion that they were women. They were, in fact, grave, modest, and hard-working brothers, Henry W. born in 1858 and Frank G., twelve years his junior. After graduating from Oxford, Henry spent seventeen years as a schoolteacher before deciding to work as a journalist in London. He later left London to join Frank in Guernsey, an island in the English Channel, where the brothers built granite cottages and began their translation of Lucian.

In 1906 the Fowler brothers published *The King's English,* offering a set of marvelously inflexible rules to be followed and setting forth common blunders and "literary blemishes" to be avoided. Henry described it as "a sort of English composition manual from the negative point of view." The book had an added benefit: it provided the answer to Oxford's question of who would compile a "short dictionary" from the as yet only 70 percent completed *OED.* The reclusive Fowlers never met Murray, they did not visit Oxford, and no one from Oxford went to Guernsey. They finished the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* in 1911, the work having taken just five years—as they said it would.

When World War I broke out, fifty-seven-year-old Henry and forty-five-year-old Frank decided they were needed at the front. Lying about their ages, they enlisted in the British army and were dismayed when they were assigned to menial work rather than battle duty. Henry was discharged in 1916—fit and hearty—but Frank died of consumption in 1918 while