

READER'S DIGEST

# Family Word Finder

A New Thesaurus of  
Synonyms and Antonyms  
in Dictionary Form

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The Reader's Digest Association, Inc.  
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## Family Word Finder



## How to Use the Family Word Finder

The *Family Word Finder* is a thesaurus, or treasury, of synonyms and antonyms, grouped into over 10,000 main entries which appear in alphabetical order. Each main entry word is printed in **boldface** type, as in a dictionary.

### Synonyms

Making up the bulk of each *Word Finder* entry are lists of synonyms and other words related to the entry word. These lists are the most important feature of this book. By scanning them you will be able to find words expressing precisely what you want to say. Chances are, the word you seek is already lurking somewhere in your subconscious mind. Scanning the synonym list is then simply a convenient means of nailing your word down immediately. The list will often do more than that for you, however. It may contain yet another word that is even more precise or expressive than the one you had in mind. It may also lead you to a brand-new idea and a memorable turn of phrase that will express your idea in a nutshell.

Immediately following each entry word is its part of speech: *n.* for noun, *v.* for verb, *adj.* for adjective, *adv.* for adverb, *prep.* for preposition, *conj.* for conjunction, and *interj.* for interjection. If the entry word is used as more than one part of speech, the synonyms for each are listed in separate paragraphs. Since many words have more than one meaning, we have numbered each separate meaning with a boldface numeral.

Every entry word and every numbered meaning is followed by an example sentence. Often, when the synonym list combines several different shades of meaning or use, we give more than one sentence for it. There are approximately 25,000 such example sentences in this book, to enable you to locate the proper list and to illustrate the exact meaning and proper use of all the entry words.

Synonyms within each list are arranged insofar as possible in decreasing order of use, from commonest to least common. Thus, synonyms you might be most apt to need appear near the beginning of each list, whereas less common synonyms and related words, including technical terms, foreign words, and slang, come toward the end of the list. We have also labeled some synonyms as *Medical*, *Nautical*, *Latin*, *Archaic*, etc., for your convenience.

Other specialized synonyms are set off from general synonyms by the label *variously*. For persons who will make extensive use of the synonym lists as a writing aid, we have freely expanded the lists to include many words that are not actually synonymous but only loosely equivalent in sense. These we have labeled *loosely*, especially in cases where their unqualified inclusion might otherwise be misleading.

The simplest definition of a synonym is "a word that means the same thing as another word." Unfortunately, this definition takes no account of the very aspect of synonyms that makes a synonym book useful. This aspect of synonyms was well described by the famous statesman and author Lord

Chesterfield (1694-1773), when he pointed out that there is invariably "some little difference, some distinction between all those words that are vulgarly called synonymous—one hath always more energy, extent, or delicacy than another."

That is exactly why we use thesauruses, or word finders. They assist us in our search for the exact nuance of feeling or meaning that will give perfect expression to our thought.

### Antonyms

Following the synonym lists, many entries have lists of antonyms, indicated by the boldface abbreviation **Ant.** When necessary, such antonyms are grouped together and numbered 1, 2, 3, etc., to match the corresponding numbered senses in the synonym lists.

### Spelling and Pronunciation Tips

Notes on spelling and pronunciation follow hundreds of main entries whose headwords are widely misspelled or mispronounced. Many of these notes include not only the facts and rules but simple hints and memory aids to help you remember them. All contain the most up-to-date, commonsense information from the most reliable authorities. Hundreds of variant spellings and pronunciations based on regional or other differences have also been noted.

In cases where there is wide uncertainty, we have provided guidance as to the currently preferred forms. Our rendering of the pronunciations is self-explanatory—no obscure symbols are used.

### Usage

The *Word Finder* provides usage guidance on three levels: example sentences, usage labels, and usage notes.

In thousands of cases, example sentences answer such questions as: Does one *coerce* another *to do* something or *into doing* it? Implicit in the example sentence is the answer to this question: *Prisoners of war were coerced into writing letters praising their captors.*

Explicit information on the status of a given synonym is furnished by usage labels within the lists. For example, "blue" as in the sentence *I'm feeling blue today* is colloquially synonymous with "depressed." Since it belongs to the informal, conversational level of usage, we have labeled it *Informal*. On the other hand, "bust" meaning "arrest" belongs to the nonstandard style of usage known as *Slang* and is so labeled.

Finally, hundreds of Usage notes answer more complex questions such as: What's the difference between *bereaved* and *bereft*? Answer: *Bereaved* refers to losing someone you love, whereas *bereft* refers to the loss of something you'd like to have: *bereft of one's inheritance, bereft of all hope*. But: *The accident bereaved her of her best friend.*

### Word Origins

Following thousands of entries in this book are *Word origins*. These tell you where many of our common words come from and can help you remember



their meaning and use. If you get into the habit of reading the *Word origins* every time you use the book, you will quickly gain a broad understanding of how our language grew.

English belongs to the Indo-European family of languages, which consists of about 100 related tongues, all descended from the prehistoric language of a pastoral, bronze-working, horse-breeding people, the Aryans, who inhabited the steppes of Central Asia about 4500 B.C. Scholars refer to their language at this stage as Proto-Indo-European, or simply Indo-European.

Over the next 3,000 years or so, the community of Indo-European speakers splintered off, to Iran and India (where their idiom developed into the sister languages, Old Persian and Sanskrit) and elsewhere in many other directions, mainly westward. The farther afield they ranged, the farther their manner of speaking the ancestral tongue diverged. The old national name, *Aryan* (meaning "noble"), survived in both Persia and India and is in fact the source of the present-day name of *Iran*.

Within a few hundred years after the primeval Aryan community started breaking up, there were already several Indo-European languages where there once had been only one. Derivative idioms grew even farther apart, so that by the dawn of recorded history a dozen branches of the Indo-European language family overspread most of western Eurasia from the Himalayas to the Atlantic.

The most important of these branches are: Indo-Iranian (comprising—in Iran—Persian and—in India—Sanskrit, together with the derivative Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, and other languages including Romany, the language of the Gypsies); Slavic (Russian, Polish, etc.); Hellenic (Greek); Italic (Latin and derivative Romance languages such as French and Italian); Celtic (Gaelic, Welsh, Breton, etc.); and finally, Germanic (English, Dutch, German, Yiddish, and the Scandinavian languages).

To illustrate the family relationship of these languages, here are the words for *mother* and *brother* in languages belonging to the above-mentioned branches and also in the common ancestor tongue, Indo-European:

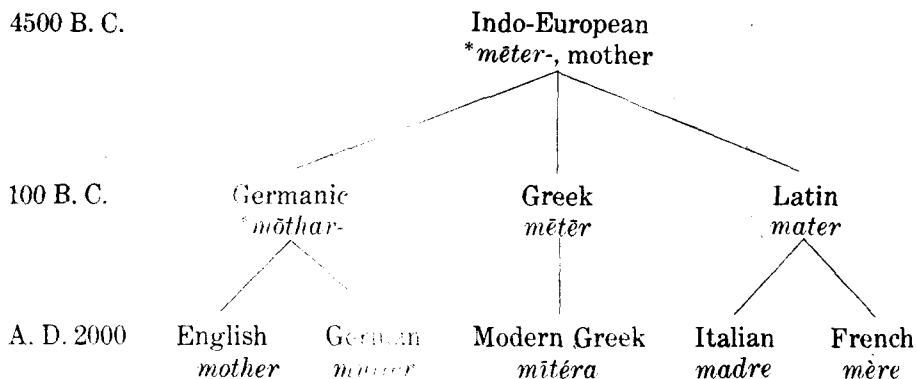
<i>English</i>	mother	brother
<i>German</i>	mutter	bruder
<i>Gaelic</i>	máthair	braithair
<i>Latin</i>	mater	frater
<i>Greek</i>	mētēr	phratēr
<i>Old Church Slavonic</i>	mati	bratrŭ
<i>Sanskrit</i>	mātr	bhrātr
<i>Indo-European</i>	*māter-	*bhrāter-

(Note: Indo-European forms are preceded by asterisks, indicating that they are *reconstructions*—that is, educated guesses by scholars as to the word's original form; also, because word endings are the least predictable, most changeable aspect of language, scholars place hyphens instead of conjectural endings at the end of each reconstructed Indo-European word.)

Because words like the *mother* words cited above have common ancestry, it is customary to refer to them as *cognates*. Thus, English *mother* is *cognate*



with Latin *mater*, although it does not derive directly from it. The following diagram shows derivations of different *mother* words from their common ancestor.



During the Roman occupation of Britain in the first four centuries of the Christian era, many Britons and Romans were bilingual, but as far as we know it never occurred to any of them that their respective languages were long-lost cousins. Still less could it have occurred to them that the speech of the Jutes, Saxons, Angles, and Frisians (who were then encamped on the North Sea from Jutland down to the mouth of the Rhine) might also be kin. It was with the coming of these Germanic tribes, however, after the collapse of Roman authority in A.D. 410, that the history of our language really began. We now refer to their descendants as the *Anglo-Saxons* and to their language as *Old English*. They were eventually to give Britain a new name: *England*, "Land of the Angles."

The Anglo-Saxon era lasted 500 years. During the second half of the period (from A.D. 800 onward), successive waves of Viking invaders took over much of England, reaching the height of their influence with the reign of Canute the Great (994-1035), king of England, Denmark, and Norway. Though the Viking invaders eventually integrated with their Anglo-Saxon cousins, these Norse-speaking newcomers left a broad and indelible mark on our vocabulary.

The language of 10th-century England is as far removed from us today as are the dragon ships of the Vikings. To read Old English with comprehension, we must study it like a foreign language. Here, for example, are the opening verses of the Lord's Prayer as recited by Englishmen in the year 1000:

#### Old English

Fæder ure,  
thū the eart on heofonum.  
sī thin nama gehālgod.  
Tōbecume thin rice.  
Gewurthe thin willa on eorþan  
swā swā on heofonum . . .

#### Modern English (King James)

Our Father  
which art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done in earth,  
as it is in heaven . . .

The Norman Conquest brought the Old English period to an abrupt close. Expropriating the English nobility in a series of bloodbaths following his coronation in London on Christmas Day, 1066, William the Conqueror installed a new ruling class. Overnight, French became the language of state business; it was to remain so for several hundred years. At the same time, William promoted marriages between Normans and English—a farsighted policy that led in the long run not only to a national reconciliation but also to the formation of a new type of English in which the basic native tongue was richly blended with the imported French word-stock. We call this language *Middle English*, and in it we can readily recognize the immediate ancestor of Modern English.

Emerging during the 12th and early 13th centuries, Middle English became a polished literary language during the 14th century, with the classic *Canterbury Tales* of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400). The following refrain from Chaucer’s “Merciless Beauty” well illustrates the blend of French and English vocabularies characteristic of the new composite idiom:

Your yēn two wol slee me sodenly,  
I may the beauté of hem not sustene . . .  
[Your two eyes will slay me suddenly,  
I may the beauty of them not sustain . . .]

*Sodenly*, *beauté*, and *sustene* are French-derived; the other words are all native English. This proportion has remained more or less the same since the 13th century. More than half of the conceptual words in typical speech or writing tend to be borrowings—mainly from French or Latin. At the same time, if you count *all* words in a typical segment of speech or writing, the native English words always outnumber borrowings by far.

The dialect of the East Midlands around London was closer to *Modern English* than any of the other dialects of England. In 1476 the printer William Caxton used this dialect when he set up shop at Westminster and printed *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*, the first book ever to be published in England. In this, as in many subsequent—enormously influential—translations from the classics, Caxton used the current speech of London and thus helped establish its predominant status.

By the reign of Henry VIII a generation later, London English was becoming the national standard. A contemporary style manual advises the writer: “Ye shall therefore take the usual speech of the Court and that of London and the shires lying about London within 60 miles, and not much above.” The language of this admonition is a bit old-fashioned—it is Modern English nonetheless.

While London town and London English were growing by leaps and bounds, Humanism—the revival of Classical learning—was becoming a major movement in England as elsewhere in Europe. During the 16th century, Humanists introduced Greek and Latin words into the language by the thousands. A large number of these words survived and now belong to our basic vocabulary.

Shakespeare’s works and the King James Bible, being contemporary with the first English settlements in America, provided a modern standard on both

sides of the Atlantic. You will find hundreds of Biblical and Shakespearean words and expressions accounted for in the *Word origin* in this book.

The arrival of colonists in Virginia and New England brought *American English* into being—almost overnight. The first settlers had grown up under Elizabeth and King James, so (literally speaking) their language might be called Elizabethan. However, most of them were country folk using dialects ranging all the way from Kentish (close to the London standard) to Yorkshire (remote from it). Thrown together in the small North American settlements under conditions of extreme isolation and hardship, they were soon speaking a new strain of English different from any of their native dialects. In constant contact with Indians, they rapidly assimilated a host of Indian words for the unfamiliar new things in their New World environment. Within a generation after the first settlements, the colonists' idiom already differed markedly from the English of England. Later colonists and immigrants added Dutch, Irish, German, French, Spanish, and Italian words to the American vocabulary.

Now, roughly 400 years after the beginnings of the split between Old World and New World English, we are experiencing an accelerated reunification of the two. Uniformity has become desirable—and inevitable. Not only is English the mother tongue of hundreds of millions of North Americans, British, Australians, New Zealanders, and South Africans, but it is a language of both state business and commerce in India, Pakistan, and much of Africa and the rest of the world. As a language of diplomacy it has become universal. The *Word origins* in this book reflect the steady growth of Anglo-American power and influence over the past three centuries. Read them and you will learn in detail how our language mirrors history.

In order to present this kind of overview, we have often grouped together related words and told you their histories in special boxes titled *Exploring the Word*. Many of these appear throughout the book. You will also find on almost every page quotations from famous writers and public figures, each illustrating effective use of a nearby entry word.

Thus the *Family Word Finder* can be used in many ways—as a thesaurus, or word finder; as a simple dictionary; as a guide to spelling, pronunciation, and usage; or simply as a book to browse in, to improve your vocabulary and familiarity with words and their stories. Keep it next to your dictionary, your writing desk, or your favorite reading chair. We believe you and your family will find it easy and enjoyable to use, and we hope you will use it often.

# A

**abandon** *v.* 1 *She abandoned her child on the doorstep. Abandon ship!*: desert, forsake, leave, depart from, leave behind, withdraw from, evacuate; give up, quit, relinquish, let go, cast aside, forswear, abdicate, renounce. 2 *The scientist abandoned his research for lack of funds*: discontinue, give up, drop, forgo, waive, junk, wash one's hands of, relinquish, forfeit, surrender.

—*n.* 3 *The Gypsies danced with abandon*: unrestraint, freedom; immoderation; recklessness, impulsiveness, impetuosity, spontaneity; enthusiasm, gusto, exuberance, spirit, dash, verve, ardor, animation.

**Ant.** 1 claim, take; keep, hold, possess. 2 continue, maintain. 3 restraint, control; moderation, tameness.

**Word origin:** *Abandon* comes from the Old French phrase *laisser a bandon*, to relinquish to another's control.

**abandoned** *adj.* 1 *The abandoned house was torn down*: deserted, forsaken, vacant, unoccupied; discarded, cast aside, cast away, relinquished, rejected, left behind, neglected. 2 *The pleasure-seeker led an abandoned life*: debauched, debased, dissipated, dissolute, degraded, profligate, reprobate, shameless, immoral, disreputable, sinful, wicked, loose, wanton, unprincipled; impure, unchaste, lewd; irreformable, irreclaimable, unrepentant.

**Ant.** 1 occupied; well-kept, kept, claimed. 2 virtuous, reputable, upright, high-principled, worthy, elevated, healthy, conscientious; moral, sinless, pure, chaste; reformed, redeemed, penitent, regenerate.

**abase** *v.* *The Bible says that the proud man shall be abased*: humble, bring low, cast down; *Informal* bring down a peg, cut down to size; humiliate, disgrace, dishonor, defame, belittle, vilify, denigrate, vitiate; downgrade, degrade, devalue, debase; shame, mock, mortify.

**Ant.** elevate, raise, uplift, lift; dignify, honor, acclaim, praise, laud, extol; promote, upgrade, inflate.

**Word origin:** *Abase* comes from Late Latin *bassus*, low.

**abashed** *adj.* *He was abashed at forgetting his wife's birthday*: embarrassed, ashamed, chagrined, mortified, humiliated, humbled, self-conscious, dismayed, bewildered, confused, dumbfounded, nonplussed, disconcerted, confounded, fazed; shy, bashful, cowed, subdued, crushed, intimidated.

**Ant.** proud, pleased, elated, exalted, buoyed; confident, poised, emboldened, reassured.

**Word origin:** *Bah!* was an exclamation of astonishment in Old French. Our word *abashed* comes from Old French *esbahir*, to get a *bah* out of someone.

**abate** *v.* *The wind abated after the storm*: decrease, diminish, reduce, lessen, subside, decline, fade, fade away, dwindle, moderate, mitigate, weaken, wane, curtail, slack, slacken, go down, lower, fall off, fall away, taper off, lighten, soften, quiet, quell, slow, slake off, temper, cool, blunt; ease, relieve, alleviate, assuage, soothe, allay, mollify, dull; dampen, restrain, restrict.

**Ant.** increase, intensify, magnify, enhance, heighten, aggravate, amplify; multiply, rise, come up, strengthen, sharpen, heat up; quicken, accelerate, hurry, speed, speed up; prolong, extend.

**Word origin:** *Abate* comes from Old French *abatre*, to beat down.

**abbey** *n.* *The monks live in their abbey in the mountains. Westminster Abbey is in London*: monastery, friary, cloister, priory, hermitage; convent, nunnery; church, cathedral, chapel.

**abbreviate** *v.* *You can abbreviate the word "Mister" as "Mr."* As time was short, he abbreviated his visit: shorten, abridge, curtail, condense, contract, reduce; cut, cut down, cut short, boil down, trim, clip, truncate.

**Ant.** lengthen, extend, elongate, stretch, stretch out, draw out; expand, enlarge, amplify, increase, augment, add to, pad out; prolong, protract; write out, write in full.

**abbreviation** *n.* *"Mr." is the abbreviation of "Mister."* *Each Reader's Digest condensed book is an abbreviation of an originally longer work*: shortened form, short form, shortening, condensed form, reduced form, compressed form, contracted form, cut-down form; contraction, abridgment, condensation, digest, synopsis, summary; lessening, trimming, curtailment, cutting, clipping, pruning.

**Ant.** full form, written-out form; lengthening, extending, extension, elongation, stretching, stretching out, drawing out; expansion, enlargement, amplification, increasing, augmentation, prolongation.

**Usage note:** *U.S.A.*, *FBI*, *Calif.*, and *Dr.* are abbreviations, shortened forms of a word or phrase to represent the full term. *NATO*, *NASA*, and *UNICEF* are a type of abbreviation called *acronyms*, abbreviations that may be pronounced as a word rather than as a series of letters. Thus, an *abbreviation* is pronounced as separate letters (*U.S.A.*, *FBI*) while an *acronym* may be pronounced as a word (*NATO*, *NASA*).

**abdicate** *v.* *Edward VIII of England abdicated to marry a commoner. He abdicated his responsibilities and fled*: resign, vacate the throne; relinquish, give up, abandon, surrender, quit, forgo, cede, yield.

**Ant.** accede to the throne; claim, possess, keep.

## abduct

◊ *Word origin:* *Abdicate* comes from Latin *ab-*, away, + *dicare*, to proclaim. Thus, when a king *abdicates*, he "proclaims away" his throne.

**abduct** *v.* *Kidnappers abducted the child:* kidnap, carry off, make off with, run off with, steal, bear off, seize.

**Ant.** return, bring back; free, set free; restore, relinquish, surrender.

**aberration** *n.* *The flaw in a lens that doesn't focus properly is called spherical aberration. The new rules were confusing and full of aberrations:* irregularity, deviation, abnormality, anomaly, divergence, aberrancy; wandering, rambling, straying, lapse. *2 His only aberration was an occasional lapse of memory:* minor mental disorder, mental lapse, abnormality, quirk, peculiarity, idiosyncrasy, eccentricity, unconformity, nonconformity, oddity, strangeness; illusion, delusion, self-deception, hallucination; madness, insanity, lunacy, derangement.

**Ant.** 1, 2 normality, regularity, uniformity, conformity. 2 sanity, soundness of mind.

**abet** *v.* *The criminal was aided and abetted by his brother:* encourage, support, sustain, back, give moral support to, sanction, uphold; urge, urge on, goad, spur, incite; lead on, egg on; assist, help, aid.

**Ant.** discourage, talk out of, dissuade, expose, denounce; deter, stop, hinder, impede, thwart, obstruct, balk.

◊ *Word origin:* *Abet* comes from Old French *abeter*, to incite, tease, or bait another.

**abeyance** *n.* *The project will be held in abeyance until spring:* postponement, suspension, deferral, adjournment, discontinuance, inaction, dormancy, latency; pause, cessation, recess, hiatus.

**abhor** *v.* *Nature abhors a vacuum. She abhors snakes:* detest, hate, loathe, despise, abominate, execrate; feel aversion toward, be revolted by, find repulsive, shudder at, recoil at, shrink from, regard with repugnance, view with horror, eschew, can't stand, can't stomach, be nauseated by.

**Ant.** love, adore, like, delight in, dote on, cherish, relish, treasure, prize, value, enjoy, admire; desire, crave, covet.

◊ *Usage note:* See **HATE**.

◊ *Word origin:* *Abhor* comes from Latin *abhorrere*, meaning to shrink away from something with your hair standing on end while shuddering violently. The Romans used the word chiefly for milder forms of detestation, however, just as we do.

**abide** *v.* *1 I can't abide loud noise:* bear, stand, tolerate, put up with, endure, stomach, brook; suffer, submit to, stand for. *2 Abide with me a while longer:* stay, remain, tarry, linger, stop; live, reside, dwell; visit, sojourn, sit; *Slang* stick with.

**Ant.** 2 go, leave, quit, depart; escape, flee, fly; abandon, shun, avoid; move, migrate, journey.

## abnegation

**abiding** *adj.* *Abraham Lincoln had an abiding faith in the Union:* lasting, everlasting, enduring, eternal, unending, continuing, permanent, durable, firm, fast; changeless, unchanging, steadfast, constant, unshakable, immutable, indissoluble.

**Ant.** temporary, passing, momentary, impermanent, ephemeral; weak, shaky, failing; changeable, fickle.

**ability** *n.* *A good salesman has the ability to sell anything:* capability, capacity, power, facility, faculty, aptitude, proficiency, knack, competence, qualification; skill, talent, know-how, expertise, adeptness, acumen; flair, genius, gift, bent.

**Ant.** inability, incapacity, incapability, inaptitude, incompetence, maladroitness; weakness, powerlessness, helplessness.

"It is a great ability to be able to hide one's ability."  
—*La Rochefoucauld*

**abject** *adj.* *1 The old couple lived in abject poverty:* hopeless, inescapable, complete, thorough; wretched, miserable, deplorable, terrible, horrible. *2 The soldier deserted like an abject coward:* lacking courage, spiritless, cringing, groveling; contemptible, despicable, vile, base, mean, low, ignoble, sordid.

**Ant.** 1 hopeful; partial; dignified, honorable. 2 courageous, spirited, bold, staunch; manly, domineering, vain, arrogant, haughty, insolent; admirable, respected, esteemed, worthy.

**abjure** *v.* *1 Pacifism abjures the use of deadly force:* disclaim, disallow, repudiate, reject. *2 Some of the prisoners abjured their heresies and lived:* renounce, forswear, recant.

**able** *adj.* *1 Our case was handled by two able lawyers:* skillful, proficient, capable, competent, expert, good, talented, highly qualified, accomplished, masterful, effective, efficient, adroit, adept, apt; experienced, practiced, learned. *2 The starving man was barely able to walk. We are not able to grant your request:* capable, fit, fitted, competent, having the means; equal to, adequate, qualified.

**Ant.** 1 unskillful, incapable, incompetent, inept, inept, inefficient, ineffective, amateurish; mediocre, indifferent, fair. 2 incapable, unfit, incompetent, inadequate, unqualified.

**ablution** *n.* *1 After ablutions in the river, the holy man continued on his way:* ceremonial washing, ritualistic washing; bathing, cleansing. *2 He had no time for his morning ablutions:* washing; bathing, cleaning, lavation; wash, bath.

◊ *Word origin:* *Ablution* comes from Latin *ab-*, away, + *luere*, to wash.

**abnegation** *n.* *In a mood of abnegation, he gave up sweets and midnight snacks:* self-denial, renunciation, relinquishment, giving up, eschewal, forbearing; abstinence, temperance, continence; rejection, refusal.

**Ant.** self-indulgence, indulgence, abandon; intemperance, incontinence; affirmation, confession.

**abnormal adj.** *The cat has an abnormal fear of birds. An abnormal amount of snow fell in October:* unnatural, atypical, unusual, irregular, aberrant, anomalous; uncommon, unconventional, exceptional, unexpected, unaccustomed, inordinate; strange, peculiar, rare, queer, odd, freakish, eccentric, bizarre, curious, outlandish, unheard of, grotesque, weird, monstrous, deformed.

**Ant.** normal, natural, typical, usual, ordinary, common; conventional, routine, regular, expected, customary, familiar, unexceptional.

◇ **Usage note:** *Abnormal* can mean either below or above normal, either better or worse than normal: *Einstein had an abnormal IQ. An idiot has an abnormal IQ.* On the other hand, *subnormal* always means below or worse than normal.

◇ **Word origin:** This word was once spelled *anormal* and came from the Greek *anomalos*, meaning irregular. Later the *b* was added by analogy with the Latin word for irregular, *abnormis*, based on Latin *ab-*, from, + *norma*, norm, hence away from the norm.

**abnormality n.** *A clubfoot is an abnormality that can often be corrected by surgery:* deformity, malformation; irregularity, aberration, anomaly, deviation; oddity, peculiarity, idiosyncrasy, eccentricity, unconformity.

**abode n.** *The hermit's abode was a cave:* residence, place of residence, dwelling place, dwelling, habitation; house, home, living quarters, domicile, lodging.

**abolish v.** *Prohibition was abolished in 1933:* eliminate, eradicate, extinguish, exterminate, terminate, end, put an end to, wipe out, stamp out, blot out, do away with, squelch, quash; repeal, revoke, annul, nullify, invalidate, rescind, cancel; abrogate, vitiate, set aside, repudiate.

**Ant.** establish, institute, introduce, create, found; support, promote, increase, sustain, continue; revive, reinstate, renew, repair, restore, reintroduce; authorize, legalize, enact.

◇ **Word origin:** *Abolish* and *abolition* are based on the Latin *abolere*, to destroy, do away with.

**abolition n.** *The senator fought for abolition of the income tax:* elimination, ending, termination, eradication, extinction, abolishment; repeal, annulment, nullification, revocation, cancellation, rescinding, repudiation, abrogation.

**Ant.** establishment, institution, introduction, creation, founding; authorization, legalization, enactment, passing; promotion; continuation; reinstatement, restoration, reintroduction.

◇ **Word origin:** See **ABOLISH**.

**abominable adj.** *1 Murder is the most abominable crime:* detestable, despicable, contempt-

ible, reprehensible, loathsome, hateful, abhorrent, disgusting, revolting, repulsive, repugnant, repellent, odious; vile, base, wretched, heinous, ignominious, villainous, infamous, atrocious, horrid, horrible, foul, hellish, damnable, cursed, accursed. **2** *The weather was abominable:* very unpleasant, disagreeable, miserable, terrible, foul, extremely bad, unsuitable, awful, *Informal* lousy.

**Ant.** 1 laudable, praiseworthy, commendable, admirable, respectable, desirable, applaudable; satisfactory, gratifying, charming, enchanting, likable. **2** pleasant, agreeable, enjoyable, pleasing, delightful, good, wonderful, charming, suitable, *Informal* beautiful.

◇ **Word origin:** *Abominable* is ultimately derived from Latin *abominari*, to detest something as an ill omen. But from the 14th until the 17th century the word was spelled *abominable* because people imagined it to have come from the Latin phrase *ab homine*, meaning away from man, hence inhuman, beastly. This misunderstanding permanently affected the meaning of the word.

**abomination n.** **1** *The dirty streets of this city are an abomination!:* abhorrence, anathema, evil, horror, torment, plague, affliction, annoyance, bugbear, *French* bête noire. **2** *My feeling of abomination for concentration camps has never changed:* loathing, repugnance, disgust, hate, hatred, abhorrence, antipathy, aversion.

**Ant.** 1 delight, joy, pleasure, treat; benefit, blessing, boon, satisfaction, gratification. **2** love, liking, affection, relish, regard; admiration, appreciation, respect, approval, esteem.

**aboriginal adj.** *The Indians were the aboriginal people of America:* native, indigenous, original, autochthonous; earliest, first, ancient, primordial, primeval, primitive, primary, prime. **Ant.** alien, foreign, immigrant, imported, exotic; late, recent, subsequent, successive, modern.

**aborigine n.** *The New Zealand aborigines still hunt with spears:* original inhabitant, primitive inhabitant, indigenous person; native, aboriginal.

**Ant.** alien, foreigner, immigrant; newcomer, late arrival, Johnny-come-lately.

◇ **Word origin:** The *Aborigines* were a tribe of ancient Italy from whom the Latins were said to be descended, and their name is traditionally supposed to be based on the phrase *ab origine*, from the beginning. The Roman statesman and orator Cicero was the first to use the word in its present sense.

**abort v.** **1** *Cows with Bang's disease often abort their calves:* miscarry, terminate the pregnancy of. **2** *The astronauts aborted the space flight when their engine caught fire:* terminate, end, halt, call off; fail, fail to develop fully.

**Ant.** 1 give birth, bear, deliver. **2** carry through,

see through, conclude, complete, finish; execute, perform, effect, achieve.

◇ *Word origin:* Abort comes from *abortus*, a form of the Latin verb meaning to miscarry.

**abortion** *n.* 1 *Her pregnancy ended in an abortion:* miscarriage, termination of pregnancy. 2 *The attempt to redesign the airplane was an abortion:* failure, unsuccessful attempt, fruitless attempt, fiasco, disaster; halting, calling off, ending, termination.

**Ant.** 1 childbirth, parturition, giving birth, delivery. 2 success, successful completion, realization, achievement.

**abound** *v.* *Our garden abounds with roses. Tulips abound in Holland:* teem, overflow, be filled, have plenty of, be well supplied, be rich in, swarm, superabound; exist in great numbers, be plentiful, flourish, be numerous.

**Ant.** lack, want, have too few, be deficient in, fall short, be scant; be in short supply.

◇ *Word origin:* See ABUNDANT.

"A faithful man shall abound with blessings."

—Proverbs 28: 20

**abrasion** *n.* 1 *The abrasion on his knee soon healed:* scraped spot, scrape; scratch, lesion. 2 *Years of abrasion had worn the stones smooth:* scraping, grating, rubbing, friction, scouring, chafing; erosion, wearing away, wearing down.

**abrasive** *n.* 1 *Use sandpaper or some other abrasive to remove the paint:* scraping material, grinding material, scouring material; smoothing substance.

—*adj.* 2 *The speaker's abrasive remarks insulted the audience:* harsh, irritating; rasping, rough, caustic, chafing.

**Ant.** 2 mild, soothing, healing.

**abreast** *adv., adj.* *The soldiers marched three abreast:* side by side, in a line across, in rank.

**Ant.** one behind another, in single file, Indian file.

**abridge** *v.* 1 *The book was abridged to a more readable length:* shorten, condense, reduce, compress, digest, abbreviate, cut, cut down, scale down, pare down, trim. 2 *No one can abridge your legal rights:* restrict, limit, curtail, diminish, lessen, reduce, decrease; deprive one of, take away.

**Ant.** 1 expand, enlarge, lengthen, increase, extend, amplify; prolong; augment, add to, supplement. 2 increase, augment, add to.

◇ *Word origin:* Abridge is from Old French *abregier*, which in turn was taken from Latin *abbreviare*, the same word that gives us *abbreviate*.

**abridgment** *n.* 1 *Have you seen the new abridgment of Gibbon's Roman history?:* shortened form, condensed form, condensation, abbreviation, digest. 2 *The city council voted for an abridgment of the mayor's power:* restriction, limitation, restraint, curtailment, reduction,

lessening, decrease, diminishing, diminution. **Ant.** 1 lengthened version. 2 expansion, enlargement, amplification, increase, augmentation, extension.

◇ *Spelling tip:* Abridge drops its final *e* in *abridgment*.

**abroad** *adv.* 1 *On our trip abroad we visited relatives in England:* overseas, out of the country. 2 *It's unsafe to be abroad at night in New York City:* out of doors, outside, out, out of the house, forth, out in the open air. 3 *A thousand rumors were abroad:* in circulation, at large, making the rounds, all around, round and about; spread far and wide, rife, astir.

**Ant.** 1 nearby, near home; in one's native land, within the country. 2 indoors, inside, in, in the house, at home, within four walls; *French* *chez soi*, *German* *zu Hause*.

**abrogate** *v.* *Congress must abrogate the new tax law:* abolish, cancel, put an end to, end, do away with, quash; repeal, revoke, rescind, annul, nullify, void, invalidate, set aside, override, reverse, undo, dissolve; retract, countermand, recall, withdraw, repudiate, renounce, abjure; *Informal* junk, throw out.

**Ant.** institute, establish, create, found; enact, ratify; confirm, sustain, uphold, support, sanction; continue; revive, renew.

**abrupt** *adj.* 1 *The car came to an abrupt stop at the barricade:* sudden, unexpected, unforeseen, unanticipated, unlooked for, unannounced; hasty, quick, rapid, swift, instantaneous, precipitate. 2 *His abrupt reply hurt our feelings:* curt, brusque, blunt, gruff, short; discourteous, impolite, uncivil, ungracious, unceremonious, rude, rough. 3 *The cliff made an abrupt descent to the sea:* steep, sheer, sharp, precipitous.

**Ant.** 1 gradual, leisurely, unhurried, deliberate, slow, easy. 2 courteous, polite, gracious, thoughtful, civil; gentle, easy. 3 gradual, easy, slow.

**abscond** *v.* *The thief absconded with the jewels:* flee, take flight, fly, depart hastily, leave suddenly; make off, steal off, steal away; escape, run away, run off.

**absence** *n.* 1 *The teacher noted the student's absence:* not being present, nonattendance, nonpresence, nonappearance, absenteeism; truancy, cut. 2 *He shows an absence of initiative:* lack, unavailability, nonexistence; scarcity, deficiency, insufficiency, scantiness, want.

**Ant.** 1 presence, attendance, appearance. 2 existence, supply; abundance, sufficiency, adequacy, surfeit.

**absent** *adj.* 1 *Why were you absent from class yesterday?:* not present, nonpresent, nonattendant; away, gone, missing, out, truant. 2 *He gave her an absent look:* inattentive, unthinking, heedless, unaware, unconscious, absent-minded, preoccupied, distracted; vacant, blank, empty, vague, dreamy, musing. —*v.* 3 *Why did you absent yourself from the*



*meeting yesterday?*: cause to be not present, fail to attend, not appear, stay away, keep away, play truant, *Informal* not show up, cut.  
**Ant.** 1 present, in attendance, attendant. 2 attentive, thoughtful, meaningful, conscious, aware, alert. 3 attend, appear at, show up.

**absolute** *adj.* 1 *The Dalai Lama was an absolute monarch*: unrestricted, unrestrained, unlimited, unconditional, unqualified, unbounded; complete, supreme, pure, full, *Informal* out-and-out. 2 *His story was an absolute lie*: complete, pure, total, thorough, unqualified, unrestricted, unadulterated, utter, unlimited; perfect, outright; *Informal* out-and-out, through and through. 3 *The police have absolute proof of his guilt*: positive, definite, conclusive, certain, sure, decisive; real, genuine, reliable, unqualified, unquestionable, confirmed, infallible, unequivocal.

**Ant.** 1 restricted, restrained, conditional, limited, qualified; constitutional. 2, 3 qualified, limited, conditional, questionable, dubious, unconfirmed, equivocal; not complete, incomplete.

**absolutely** *adv.* 1 *I am absolutely sure these are the facts*: entirely, completely, thoroughly, wholly, utterly, definitely, positively; unconditionally, without limitation. 2 *Good nutrition is absolutely essential for your health*: positively, certainly, utterly, definitely, decidedly, truly, really, indeed; undoubtedly, unquestionably, unequivocally, indubitably.

**Ant.** 1 somewhat, fairly, reasonably, approximately. 2 probably, conditionally.

**absolve** *v.* 1 *The priest absolved their sins*: pardon, forgive, shrive, declare removed. 2 *The jury absolved him of the crime*: acquit, find not guilty, judge innocent; exonerate, vindicate, clear. 3 *I was absolved of having to pay my partner's debts*: release, free, set free, excuse from, exempt, discharge, loose, deliver.

**Ant.** 1 accuse, blame; condemn. 2 convict, charge, find guilty. 3 obligate, oblige, bind, hold to, be held responsible.

◇ **Word origin**: Absolve comes from the Latin *absolvere*, which in Roman law meant to acquit, to pronounce not guilty.

**absorb** *v.* 1 *The sponge absorbed all the spilled water*: soak up, take up, suck up, swallow up, drink in, sponge up. 2 *Can the students absorb this lesson in an hour?*: take in completely, assimilate, digest; *Informal* drink in, make part of oneself. 3 *I was so absorbed in this book that I didn't hear you*: engross, immerse, occupy, preoccupy, engage, enwrap; arrest, rivet, fix, fascinate.

**Ant.** 1 exude, eject, cast off, cast out, disperse, dispel; drip. 2 give out, disperse, impart. 3 unoccupy; distract.

◇ **Spelling tip**: Remember that the final *b* of *absorb* changes to *p* in *absorption*.

◇ **Word origin**: Absorb comes from Latin *absorbere*, to swallow up or devour (in the sense

that quicksand or whirlpools devour) or more mildly, to engross.

**absorbing** *adj.* *Boys find Tom Sawyer an absorbing book*: fascinating, interesting, engrossing, captivating, intriguing, engaging; exciting, thrilling.

**abstain** *v.* *Vegetarians abstain from eating meat*: refrain, desist, forbear, eschew, avoid, forgo, decline, refuse; deny oneself.

**Ant.** partake of, indulge in, yield to, give in to; overdo, abandon oneself to, make a slave of oneself to.

**abstention** *n.* *Vegetarians are known for their abstention from eating meat*: abstaining, nonindulgence, refraining, desisting, forbearance, eschewing, eschewal, avoidance, refusal; nonparticipation, denying oneself.

**Ant.** indulgence, abandon.

**abstinence** *n.* *I admire Quakers for their abstinence*: nonindulgence, self-denial; self-restraint, self-control, forbearance, abstention; (*variously*) temperance, sobriety; continence, chastity.

**Ant.** indulgence, self-indulgence, abandon, excess; (*variously*) intemperance, dissipation; wantonness; gorging, gluttony; greediness, covetousness, graspingness, acquisitiveness.

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"Total abstinence is easier than perfect moderation."  
 —St. Augustine

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**abstract** *adj.* 1 *Abstract ideas may lead to concrete plans*: theoretical, theoretic, conceptual, general, generalized, imaginary, visionary, hypothetical, indefinite, impractical; subtle, profound, abstruse, intellectual.

—*n.* 2 *Please write an abstract of this scientific article*: summary, synopsis, précis, recapitulation; digest, condensation, abridgment; outline.

—*v.* 3 *This machine abstracts salt from sea water*: extract, remove, withdraw, take out, take; separate, dissociate, isolate. 4 *Please abstract this scientific article*: summarize, synopsise; digest, condense, abridge; outline.

**Ant.** 1 concrete, specific, material; practical; factual, definite, real, actual. 2 amplification, enlargement, expansion. 3 add, inject; mix, unite, combine.

**abstruse** *adj.* *Mathematics can be an abstruse subject*: hard to understand, obscure, incomprehensible, unfathomable, complex, puzzling, perplexing, arcane, enigmatic; profound, deep, subtle, abstract, remote, esoteric.

**Ant.** simple, easy, obvious, clear; superficial, light, amusing, entertaining.

**absurd** *adj.* *It's absurd to believe that the earth is flat. The clown wore an absurd costume*: unreasonable, illogical, irrational, preposterous, senseless; ridiculous, foolish, silly, stupid, ludicrous, nonsensical, asinine, comical, farcical; funny, laughable; *Informal* crazy, wild.

**Ant.** reasonable, logical, sensible, rational, sound; smart, intelligent, sagacious, judicious, prudent.

**Word origin:** Absurd is from Latin *absurdus*, meaning senseless, formed from *ab-*, completely + *surdus*, deaf; hence *absurd* implies deaf to the truth, deaf to reason.

**absurdity** *n.* *His story of being kidnapped by little green men was sheer absurdity. The absurdities of the playful little monkeys amused us:* nonsense, unreasonableness, unbelievability, idiocy, inanity, asininity, irrationality, ridiculousness, drivel; falsehood, fallacy, delusion; foolishness, buffoonery, comicalness, silliness.

**Ant.** truth; reasonableness, credibility; wisdom, sagacity.

**abundance** *n.* *There was such an abundance of food that we all overate:* ample amount, great supply, full measure, profusion, sufficiency; excess, more than enough, surplus, glut, plenitude, repletion, plethora, surfeit, copiousness; heap, flood, bounty, wealth.

**Ant.** scarcity, deficiency, lack, dearth, scantiness, sparseness, paucity.

**abundant** *adj.* *There is abundant water despite the dry spell:* ample, sufficient, enough, more than enough, profuse, copious, prolific, bounteous, bountiful, abounding, lavish, brimming, teeming; rife, replete.

**Ant.** insufficient, scant, sparse, meager, uncommon, scarce, skimpy, sparing.

**Word origin:** Abundant comes from Latin *abundare*, to overflow. Our word *abound* also comes from this Latin word.

**abuse** *v.* **1** *A good workman doesn't abuse his tools. Stop abusing that dog!* misuse, use improperly, ill-use; mistreat, maltreat, ill-treat; harm, hurt, injure; impose upon. **2** *The old shrew abused everyone in a loud voice:* insult, speak ill of, scold, berate, carp at, rail at, revile, vilify, castigate; speak harshly to, reproach, criticize, censure, bawl out, upbraid; belittle, malign, slur, denigrate; curse, slander, denounce, defame, disparage, inveigh against. —*n.* **3** *Borrowing money is an abuse of friendship:* misuse, unfair use, improper use, misapplication, misemployment; imposition. **4** *Child abuse is a punishable offense:* mistreatment, maltreatment, ill-use, cruelty; injury, harming, beating, assault. **5** *I'll listen to no more of your abuse!* insulting language, insults, harsh language; berating, railing, invective, tirade; reproach, criticism, censure, scolding, upbraiding, castigation, carping; belittling, sneering, disparagement, slander, vilification; cursing, defamatory remarks, defamation.

**Ant.** **1** respect, protect, care for. **2** praise, speak well of, compliment, extol, laud, flatter, sweet-talk, acclaim. **5** praise, compliment, acclaim; flattery.

**abusive** *adj.* **1** *Please don't use such abusive lan-*

*guage:* insulting, harsh, vituperative, mean, railing, acrimonious; offensive, obscene, foul-mouthed, vile, rude, gross; derogatory, disparaging, defamatory, scurrilous, deprecatory, castigating, critical, censorious, slanderous, reviling, maligning, vilifying, scornful. **2** *He was arrested for his abusive treatment of the dog:* cruel, improper; harmful, hurtful, injurious.

**Ant.** **1** laudatory, flattering, complimentary, praising, extolling, mild, courteous, respectful, polite. **2** kind; just.

**abut** *v.* *There is a fence where the two yards abut:* meet end to end, meet, join, adjoin, touch; be contiguous, be adjacent to, be next to.

**abysmal** *adj.* *The serfs were maintained in a state of abysmal ignorance:* thorough, endless, unending, complete; bottomless, boundless, unfathomable, deep, profound, extreme, vast.

**Pronunciation tip:** The *s* in *abysmal* should be a buzzing *z* sound. It is *a-biZ-mal*, not *a-bis-mal*.

**abyss** *n.* **1** *One slip on this mountain and you'll fall into the abyss:* bottomless pit, vast chasm, crevasse, fissure, gorge, gully; void, depth, nadir, gulf. **2** See HELL.

**Ant.** **1** elevation, height; mountain, hill, mount; summit, zenith.

**Word origin:** Abyss goes back to the Greek word *abyssos*, bottomless. The modern senses of the word first appeared in Biblical Greek, where *abyssos* was used for the great deep of Genesis 1: 2 and for the bottomless pit of Revelation 9: 1.

**academic** *adj.* **1** *He remembered his academic days fondly:* school, scholastic, educational; collegiate, university. **2** *A good historian must have an academic mind:* scholarly, studious; learned, educated, erudite; pedantic, bookish. **3** *One brother went to an academic high school, the other to a trade school:* general, liberal-arts, scholastic, college-preparatory; nontechnical, nonvocational, nonspecialized. **4** *How to talk to a Martian is rather an academic question:* theoretical, hypothetical, abstract, speculative, conjectural; not practical, remote, ivory-towered.

**Ant.** **2** nonscholarly, nonstudious, unpedantic; uneducated, unschooled, untaught, unlettered, unlearned. **3** technical, vocational, trade, specialized. **4** practical, immediate, common-sense; everyday, ordinary, matter-of-course, matter-of-fact.

**Word origin:** Academy comes from *Akade-meia*, name of the gymnasium on the outskirts of ancient Athens where Plato taught. It was named after *Akademios*, a legendary hero of Attica.

**accede** *v.* **1** *The mayor acceded to the citizens' demands:* consent to, approve, agree to, grant, assent to, accept, concur with; concede, permit, yield to, submit to, defer to, acquiesce; surren-