

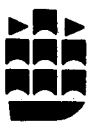
# Longman Concise English Dictionary

100,000 entries

Over 100 full-page illustrations

Reference for the whole family

# **Longman Concise English Dictionary**



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The publishers are indebted to other past and present members of the Longman Lexicographic Unit for their contribution to the dictionary, including particularly Robert F. Ilson, James Clarke, James Coakley, David Fairlamb, Heather Gay, Sean O'Boyle, Ellayne Parker, and Margaret Penney. In addition, they wish to express their thanks to the following: for editorial assistance, Peter Adams, Barbara Burge, Jacky Billington, Valerie Dudley, Susan Engineer, Bonnie Hearn, Sylvia Mansfield; for assistance with pronunciations, Philip Brew, Gordon Walsh, Vera Grant, Cliff Waterman, and the BBC Pronunciation Unit; and for assistance with etymologies, John Clark, Peter Davies, Anthony Neale, Margaret Procter, Eva Wagner, and Hazel Wright.

We would like to acknowledge the services of the panel of eminent linguists who have provided invaluable guidance in the compilation of Longman dictionaries:

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Our gratitude is due also to the members of the Longman Advisory Board, who have given generously of their advice, encouragement, and constructive criticism of various matters relating to the compilation and presentation of dictionaries that we have laid before them:

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We are grateful also to the  
following organizations, who  
have provided us with  
information:

British Aerospace

British Telecom

Ford Motor Company

IBA Broadcasting Galleries

Olympus Optical Co Ltd

Philips, Croydon

Sony (UK) Ltd

Thorn EMI Video Programmes  
Ltd

## Foreword

by Professor Sir Randolph Quirk

For me, the publication of any new dictionary provides interest and pleasure. This should indeed be true for *anyone* who loves the English language, who takes pride in the way it is used, and who takes pride also in the world leadership in the art of dictionary-making exerted by English-speaking lexicographers.

But the present occasion is one of special pleasure and excitement. The skilled team of lexicographers at Longman (the firm which published Johnson's Dictionary in 1755) have addressed themselves to the task of producing a dictionary specially designed for that most unspecialized readership, *the family*. There are of course many excellent dictionaries which seek to cater for this public. But the Longman team have given a great deal of original thought, and have conducted a good deal of original research, to ensure that they have the best technique of presentation, the best selection of words and meanings, the best and most informative modes of definition, explanation, and illustration.

To the arduous nature of such fundamental inquiry, I can personally testify, as the chair-

man of the linguistic advisory group that has been privileged to discuss these issues with the Longman team and to offer help, guidance, and criticism. But many of the admirable features of this dictionary have proceeded from advances in computational technology, to the potential of which the Longman Group have been quite exceptionally alert. In consequence, users will find, as they move from word to word, a far higher degree of consistency in treatment than they have been accustomed to; a solid defence against circularity of definition; a guarantee that all appropriate cross-references have indeed been provided.

The general introduction explains the special features in more detail. My happy task is merely to congratulate the team on a magnificent achievement.

Randolph Quirk  
Vice-Chancellor, University of London,  
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## Preface

In 1755, Longman published Dr Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*. In the two hundred or so years since then, English has changed considerably, and branched off down some pathways Johnson could never have anticipated, but the underlying characteristics and processes of language that he attempted to classify and describe remain much the same today as in the eighteenth century: a continuing challenge to the art and science of the lexicographer.

With the rapid expansion of science and technology, the vocabulary of English is growing more quickly and exuberantly than at any time in its history. There are simply more words about nowadays than ever there were in the past, and in order to be able to cope with the complexities of late 20th-century life, and understand the messages that are streaming towards us from all sides, we need an up-to-date, reliable, and straightforward guidebook. That is what the editors of this dictionary have attempted to provide: a reference work that gathers together over 70000 current English words and expressions, from wherever in the world the language is spoken, gives a clear and concise account of their meanings, and offers guidance on the way in which they are used and pronounced.

How have we gone about ensuring that this dictionary is as comprehensive and as useful as possible? I spoke above of the art and science of lexicography: much of the science lies in the collection of evidence about the language, and much of the art in the interpretation of that evidence and in the use of it to create lucid dictionary definitions. No single person could carry in his or her head all the myriad new terms spawned every year in all the various fields of human endeavour, let alone recall them at will; so the lexicographer must collect data. In order to compile this dictionary, we set up an extensive reading programme of current books, periodicals, and newspapers, searching for new words and new meanings of old words. The file of examples of words in context that we have accumulated, which numbers in excess of half a million, enables us to make authoritative statements about the current state of the language over a broad spectrum of subject areas, from biochemistry and computing to the cinema and cricket. As the map on p xi indicates, we have gathered our evidence from all over the British Isles, and from wherever else in the world English is spoken as a first language.

Once the data has been gathered, it must be interpreted and put into a convenient form for you, the user of the dictionary. This is the art of the lexicographer: to condense and codify the confusing

babble of words that fly about our heads every day into an understandable and easily used work of reference.

How is it all done? Well of course no dictionary-maker nowadays starts completely from scratch. In this sense all lexicographers are standing on giants' shoulders, using the basic common core of the language, which has been amply recorded in the past, as the starting-off point for their labours. And the information that has been accumulated about changes in the language is the cue to depart from that point.

For example, the lexicographer working on the word *acrobatic* for this dictionary, which in all other dictionaries is defined in very general terms simply as 'of or relating to an acrobat', found this example of its use by Tina Brown in *Punch* (February 1976):

'The hero still wields a low, mocking laugh and vertiginously acrobatic eyebrows.'

On the basis of this and other evidence, she was able to record a new meaning of *acrobatic*, 'very mobile', and illustrate it with the *Punch* quotation.

Another editor, working on the word *bottle*, had these examples available to her:

'Once I stole a jar of Brylcreem [sic] from the tuck shop. But I didn't have the bottle to carry it through. In the end I took it back again.'

Nik Cohn, *Rolling Stone* (July 1973)

'Soft, that's what they are. They pay them too much. Kids of 14 with money in their pocket instead of a steel comb. Stands to reason they ain't got no bottle . . . Know what I mean?'

Llew Gardner, *The Listener* (June 1974)

'In its 150-year existence, the Metropolitan Police has developed its own group loyalties, inbred customs and language. With the helmet that passes from father to son, goes a demotic inheritance: "We were mobbanded in the nondescript and chummy's bottle went and we felt his collar" (A number of us were in the unmarked car together and the suspect lost his nerve and we arrested him).'

Michael Cockerell, *The Listener* (February 1975)

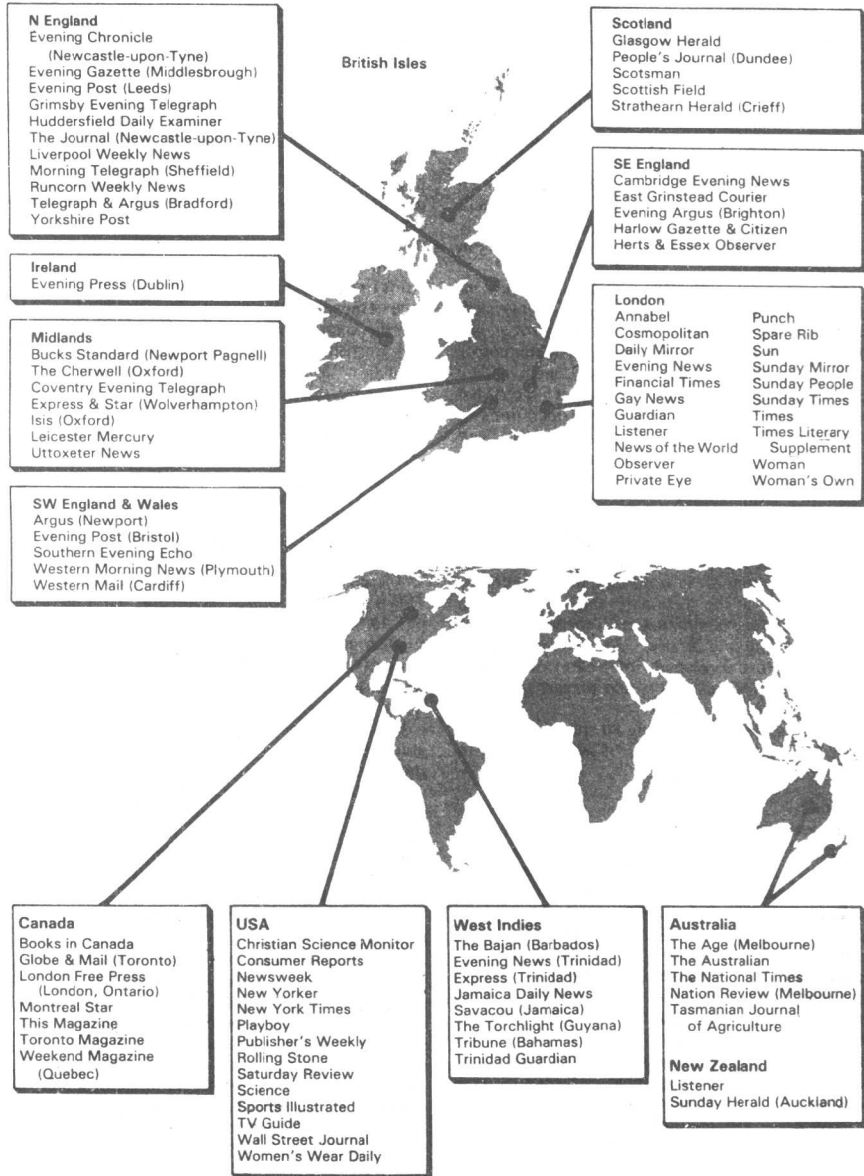
'I simply was not born with the right amount of what is known in cockney circles as bottle. Downright nerve, in other words.'

Christopher Matthew, *Punch* (October 1976)

'To their critics, their [West Ham's] failures have not been down to their refusal to kick their way to the top, but to lacking the character, the 'bottle' to make their skill count.'

*Time Out* (May 1980)

## Some sources used in compiling the dictionary



These enabled her to enter the British slang meaning of *bottle*, 'nerve', which does not appear in any other dictionary of comparable size.

If one facet of the lexicographer's art is the identification of new meanings, another, and perhaps even more important one, is the writing of clear, understandable, and unambiguous definitions. We have striven in this dictionary to make the meanings of the 50000 words we define as accessible to the user as is possible within what is, in lexicographic terms, a fairly limited scope. We have avoided overly technical terms where we can, and where their use is unavoidable we have ensured that they are in their turn clearly defined at their own entry in the dictionary.

Of course, in such a huge undertaking few individual human beings could hope to apply such standards with absolute consistency throughout. This is where the technology of the computer comes to the aid of the art of lexicography. Longman have devised a unique processing system that has enabled us to perform a number of automated operations on the dictionary that previously could only have been done manually, with much labour and less than 100 per cent accuracy, or indeed might not have been attempted at all. Among the tasks the computer has performed for us has been the monitoring of every word we have used in definitions. This has involved, in the first place, a cross check against all the entries, to make sure that every word used in a definition is itself defined in the dictionary and in the second place, a careful examination of all vocabulary items used in definitions in over 180 different subject areas, ensuring consistency of treatment and the elimination of words that would present too great difficulty to the non-expert.

For example, the following 80 specialized terms have been used in definitions of words relating to photography:

aperture	iris	screen
black-and-white	lamp	sensitive
bright	lens	sensitivity
camera	light	sensitized
cinematographic	lightproof	setting
colour	light-sensitive	shade
contrast	mounted	shadow
dark	moving	sharp
darkroom	negative	shutter
develop	opaque	silver
development	optical	slides
diaphragm	paper	sodium
emulsion	photograph	spectrum
enlargement	photographic	speed
expose	photography	spool
exposure	picture	still
fast	plate	subject
filter	positive	take
film	print	television
fixing	projector	tones
flashbulb	radiation	transparency
flashlight	rays	transparent
f number	reflected	view
focus	reflection	viewfinder
ground glass	reproduce	wide-angle
hand-held	reproduction	zoom
image	safelight	

Of these, the most common are:

photographic	48	occurrences	light	12
photograph	29		picture	12
film	22		plate	12
camera	20		print	11
image	16		negative	10
lens	16		photography	9

Technology in the service of art. For although lexicography is fundamentally about the exercise of judgment, it should never be subjective judgment unsupported by evidence. The definition-writer's skill, of teasing out meanings and encapsulating them elegantly and concisely, must always be subject to the corrective of linguistic fact. And this holds true just as much in the area of usage as in the area of meaning. We do not see it as part of the job of a dictionary to propound arbitrary rules for 'correct English' based on yesterday's usage; rather it must be a dispassionate observer and recorder of current linguistic trends. This stance should not, however, be viewed as an abdication of the responsibility to inform: for opinions on the 'correctness' of certain words and meanings are part of the linguistic facts about those words and meanings, and this dictionary attempts to give an accurate record of such opinions where they are widespread. For example, we note that the meaning 'uninterested' for *disinterested* (which in fact predates the meaning 'unbiased') is 'disapproved of by some speakers'. This is not a prescriptive dictionary; but it does set out to describe the prescriptions that exist in English. It is and must always remain the responsibility of the speakers and writers of the language to decide whether they will abide by them or flout them.

Recognizing the need to give clear and up-to-date guidance on English pronunciation, we have, with the help of market research, devised a system that is a significant advance over previous ones in its comprehensibility. It relies almost exclusively on the spelling system of English, thus avoiding the unfamiliar symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet and the confusing use of accents and other marks that change the value of a letter.

Language is always one jump ahead of lexicography; or, as Samuel Johnson more elegantly phrased it in the Preface to his Dictionary, 'there never can be wanting some . . . who will consider that no dictionary of a living tongue ever can be perfect, since while it is hastening to publication, some words are budding, and some falling away.' But it is our belief that the lexicographic and computational expertise devoted to this book enable us to claim a unique place for it as a mirror of the current state of the English language, and that the contributions of the many expert consultants listed on pp vii-viii, and of our own specialist editors, have ensured that another of Johnson's disclaimers, 'that he, whose design includes whatever language can express, must often speak of what he does not understand', need no longer be made.

John Ayto

# Explanatory chart

Numbers in brackets refer to paragraphs in the guide to the dictionary (pp xvi–xxvii).

angle brackets enclosing an example of an entry used in context (7)

**ash** /ʌʃ *often prolonged* / *vi* to exclaim in amazement, joy, or surprise  
 <ooking and ~ing>

**academy** /əˈkædəmi/ *n* 1 [C] a the school for advanced education founded by Plato b the philosophical doctrines associated with Plato's Academy

**acquiesce** /əˈkwies/ *vi* to submit or comply tacitly or passively  
 — often + *in*

usage note indicating the phrase (collocation) in which an entry is frequently found (8.5)

**adrift** /əˈdrɪft/ *adv* or *adj* 1 afloat without motive power or mooring and at the mercy of winds and currents 2 in or into a state of being unstuck or unfastened — esp in *come adrift*

**-agogue** /-əˈɡɒɡ/ *comb form* [(-n)] 1 substance that promotes the secretion or expulsion of <menagogue> 2 leader, guide <pedagogue> — sometimes derog <demagogue>

**agranulocyte** /əˈɡrænʊləʊsaɪt/ *n* any of various white blood cells with cytoplasm that does not contain conspicuous granules  
 — compare GRANULOCYTE

**alternative society** *n* [the] group of people who reject conventional social institutions, practices, and values in favour of a lifestyle based esp on communal ownership and self-sufficiency — compare COUNTERCULTURE

**anabatic** /ˌənəˈbætɪk/ *adj* moving upwards <an ~ wind>  
 [OK *anabatic*, verbal of *anabainein* to go up or inland, fr *ana-* + *bainein* to go]

**antebellum** /ˌæntɪˈbeləm/ *adj* existing before the war, esp the US Civil War [*an* ~ *brick mansion*]

**assignment** /ˌæsɪɡˈneɪʃ(ə)n/ *n* 1 the act of assigning; also the assignment made 2 a meeting, esp a secret one with a lover  
 <returned from an ~ with his mistress — W B Yeats>

**astronomy** /əˈstrɒnəmi/ *n* a branch of science dealing with the celestial bodies [☉]

**author** /ˈɔːθə/, [fem *authoress*] /-res, -rɪs/ *n* 1a the writer of a literary work ...

**bag pipe** /-ˈpi:p/ *n* a wind instrument consisting of a leather bag, mouth tube, chanter, and drone pipes — often pl with *sing.* meaning but *sing.* or pl in constr

**ball** *n* 1 either of the 2 crosspieces that lie on the stumps to form the wicket in cricket [SPORT] 2 chiefly Br a device for confining or separating animals

**ban** /bæn/ *vi* -*ns* to prohibit, esp by legal means or social pressure

**bandwagon** /-ˈwæɡən/ *n* a party, faction, or cause that attracts adherents by its timeliness, momentum, etc [band + wagon]  
 — jump/climb on the bandwagon to attach oneself to a successful cause or enterprise in the hope of personal gain

**barrel** *vi* [-̩, (NAm -ɪ, -̩)] to put or pack in a barrel

**blew** /bləʊ/ [past of *blow*]

**boletus** /bəˈleɪtəs, bɒl-/ *n*, pl *boletums*, [*bolet* /-tɪeɪ/] any of a genus of fleshy fungi, some of which are edible

capitalization (5)

usage note indicating the phrase (collocation) in which a verb frequently appears (8.5)

arrow indicating the part of speech formed when a combining form is added to a word or word part (10)

cross-reference recommending the user to look up a related entry (9)

italicized definite article indicating that an entry is always preceded by the (8.5)

etymology showing history of an entry (12)

example showing an entry used in a typical context (7)

example consisting of an illustrative quotation showing the use of an entry in an actual context (7)

eye symbol indicating that the entry has an accompanying illustration or table (9)

usage note giving grammatical information about an entry (4.1)

homograph number (1.1)

feminine form of an entry (2)

hand symbol recommending the user to look up an illustration or table (9)

idiom (1.3)

inflection (4)

inflectional cross-reference giving an inflected form of an entry (9)

irregular plural (4.1)

	<b>'bolshie, bolshy /'bolshi/ n</b> a Bolshevik — <b>informal</b>	usage note indicating the style, attitude, or level of formality of an entry (8.3)
main entry (1.1)	<b>'bolt, hole</b> /n/ 1 a hole into which an animal runs for safety 2 a means of rapid escape or place of refuge	
object of a verb (6.3)	<b>'bond</b> vt 1 to overlap [ <b>eg bricks</b> ] for solidity of construction 2 to put [ <b>goods</b> ] in bond until duties and taxes are paid	
part of speech (3)	<b>'bone /boʊn/ [n]</b> 1a (any of the hard body structures composed of) the largely calcium-containing connective tissue of which the adult skeleton of most vertebrate animals is chiefly composed <b>see ANATOMY</b> ...	
two parts of speech shown in combination (3)	<b>'bop /bɒp/ [vi or n]</b> —pp- (to strike with) a blow (eg of the fist) — <b>informal</b>	regional label, in this case indicating that the entry is used only in British English (8.2)
undefined run-on entry (1.2)	<b>bottom drawer</b> n, [ <b>Br</b> ] (a drawer for storing) a young woman's collection of clothes and esp household articles, kept in anticipation of her marriage	
	<b>cacophony /kə'kɒfəni/ n</b> harsh or discordant sound; dissonance ... — <b>cacophonous</b> <b>adj</b>	
sense number (6.1)	<b>caff /kæf/ n, Br CAFE 1</b> [ <b>esp</b> ] a cheap plain one	sense divider (6.1)
note indicating whether an entry takes a singular or plural verb (4.1)	<b>calson</b> /'kays(ə)n, kə'soʊn/ n [ <b>1</b> ] a chest or wagon for artillery ammunition 2a a watertight chamber used for construction work under water or as a foundation [ <b>b</b> ] a float for raising a sunken vessel ...	sense letter (6.1)
arrow indicating the part of speech formed when a suffix is added to a word or word part (10)	<b>calends, kalends /'kælɪndz/ [n pl but sing or pl in constr]</b> the first day of the ancient Roman month ...	
	<b>'call /kɔːl/ ... vi 1 ... c</b> [ <b>of an animal</b> ] to utter a characteristic note or cry ...	usual/only subject of a verb
	<b>-d suffix [f→vb]</b> — used to form the past tense of regular weak verbs that end in <i>e</i> ; compare <b>-ed</b>	
	<b>'daring /'deərɪŋ/ <b>adj</b></b> adventurously bold in action or thought — <b>&lt;- acrobats&gt;</b> — <b>&lt;- crimes&gt;</b>	swung dash replacing entry in an example (7)
	<b>'date line /-li:n/ n</b> 1 a line in a written document or publication giving the date and place of composition or issue 2 [ <b>INTERNATIONAL DATE LINE</b> ] — <b>date line</b> <b>vi</b>	synonymous cross-reference to a compound entry (9)
temporal label showing that the use of a word or meaning is limited to special contexts (8.1)	<b>'day break /-breɪk/ n</b> [ <b>DAWN 1</b> ]	synonymous cross-reference to a particular sense (9)
usage note applying to more than one sense (8)	<b>deer /diə/ n, pl deer</b> also <b>does</b> 1 any of several ruminant mammals of which most of the males and some of the females bear antlers 2 [ <b>archaic</b> ] an animal; esp a small mammal	
verb entry ending in -ise separated by a comma from -ize, indicating that the two forms are equal variants (2)	<b>dependent /dɪ'pend(ə)nt/ <b>adj</b></b> 1 determined or conditioned by another; contingent 2 relying on another for support ... — <b>USE (1&amp;2) + on or upon</b>	
	<b>'dispersonalize, -ize</b> /di'spəʊnəl-ɪz/ <b>vi</b> to deprive of the sense of personal identity ...	two entries separated by a comma indicating that they are equal variants (2)
	<b>'dermat- /də'mæt-/ <b>dermate-</b></b> <b>comb form</b> skin < <b>dermatitis</b> > < <b>dermatology</b> >	
two entries separated by also indicating that the latter is a secondary variant (2)	<b>'discrete, chiefly NAm disreals</b> /di'skri:tə/ n, pl <b>discretes</b> /-ˌdɪs-kri:t/ 1 a mark placed over a vowel to indicate pronunciation as a separate syllable (eg in <i>native</i> ) ...	regional variant, in this case indicating that the second form is used chiefly in the USA and Canada (2)
	<b>'diagnostic /di-ə'ɡnɒstɪk/ also <b>diagnostical</b> /-tɪ-/ <b>adj</b></b> of or involving diagnosis	

## Explanatory chart – pronunciations

oblique lines enclosing a pronunciation (11.1.2)

hiss /his/ vi ...

'hire /hɪr-ə/ n ...

Deutsche Mark /dɔɪtʃ maɪk / (Ger dɔɪtʃ mark) n ...

entente /ontent (Fr ɑ̃tɑ̃t) n ...

honorary /on(ə)rəri/ adj ...

'leeward /leewood: naut 'looɪd-/ adj or adv ...

hoodwink /hood wɪŋk/ vt ...

'hoof beat /-bi:t/ n ...

impossible /im 'pɔsəbl/ adj ... — *impossibly* adv. *impossibility*

/im 'pɔsə bɪləti. .... /n/

hors d'œuvre /aw 'duvr (Fr ɔ:r dəvr)/ n. pl *hors d'œuvres* also *hors*

d'œuvre /duvr(z) (Fr ~) ...

controversy /kontra 'vɜ:si: also kən'trovɜ:si/ n ...

gypophile /gɪp 'sɒli: *often* 'gɪpə 'lɪ:ə/ n ...

lieutenant /leɪ 'tɛnənt; *Royal Navy* lə 'tɛnənt; *NAm* luoɪ'tɛnənt/ n ...

pronunciation containing a centred dot (11.3.4)

foreign pronunciations (11.8.2)

pronunciation containing (ə) (11.3.2)

specialist pronunciation, in this case indicating that the word is pronounced differently by sailors (11.4.3)

stress mark showing primary stress (11.2.1)

stress pattern shown in compound words and phrases (11.2.3)

swung dash indicating that the plural is pronounced in the same way as the singular (11.3.5)

two pronunciations separated by *often*, indicating that they are variants but that the second is considered incorrect by many speakers (11.4.1)

stress mark showing secondary stress (11.2.2)

another stress pattern that can be used without otherwise changing the pronunciation (11.2.4)

two pronunciations separated by *also*, indicating that they are variants but that the second is less common, or is considered less correct by some speakers (11.4.1)

pronunciation showing specialist and regional variant (11.4.3)

# How to use this Dictionary

## 1 Order of entries

### 1.1 Main entries

Alphabetical order of entry, letter by letter, applies to all main entries, whether they are single words, hyphenated words, or compounds consisting of two or more individual words. This means that, for example, **give away** comes between **giveaway** and **give in**.

A compound written as a single word comes before the same compound written with a hyphen, which in turn comes before the same compound written as two or more separate words; hence **run-down** precedes **run-down** and **run down**.

A main entry with a number in it comes before a main entry with a letter in the same position; so **M15** and **M16** come between **mi-** and **miaow**.

But main entries that *begin* with a number (eg **2**, **4**, **5-T**) are listed as if the number were spelt out as a word.

Main entries beginning with **Mc-** are listed as if they were spelt **Mac-**; those beginning with **St** are shown with the abbreviation spelt out as **Saint**.

Many words that share the same spelling have a different pronunciation or a different history, or are different in grammar. Such words are shown separately in this dictionary, with small numbers in front to distinguish them; see, for example, the four entries at **lead**. These words are listed in historical order, according to when they first appeared in English.

### 1.2 Undefined words

Words whose meaning can easily be deduced, because they consist of a base form plus an added ending, are not given definitions. These words (run-ons) are shown at the end of the definition their base form, and after the etymology, if there is one:

**charitable** ... *adj* ... - **charitableness** *n*, **charitably** *adv*

The meaning of **charitableness** can be guessed from the meaning of **charitable** plus the meaning of the ending **-ness**, which can be found at its own place in the dictionary. Sometimes the undefined entry has the same form as its base, but a different part of speech:

**chink** *n* a short sharp sound - **chink** *vb*

This means that the verb **chink** is obviously related to the noun **chink** - 'to make, or cause to make, a short sharp sound'.

Words whose meaning can be guessed because

they consist of a base form plus something added at the beginning are shown at their own place in the dictionary, but with no definition; see, for example, **indecorous** and **unabridged**.

Some words formed with beginnings and endings have a specific meaning, but also a very general one that can be guessed. For these words, the general meaning is shown in the form of an etymology:

**airer** ... *n* ... a freestanding, usu collapsible, framework for airing or drying clothes, linen, etc  
[<sup>2</sup>**AIR**+<sup>2</sup>**-ER**]

This means that the noun **airer** has also a very general meaning which is the sum of the meanings of the verb **air** and the ending **-er**: 'a person or thing that airs' (see 12.7).

### 1.3 Idiomatic phrases

An idiom is a fixed phrase whose meaning cannot be guessed from the meanings of the individual words from which it is made up. Idioms are shown at the end of an entry, after the etymology and any derived undefined words:

**'call vi ... - call a spade a spade** to speak frankly and usu bluntly

Compound verbs that end in a preposition, such as **put up with**, are treated as idioms, although those that end in an adverb, such as **give away**, are main entries.

Idioms are entered at the first meaningful word they contain. Hence **live it up** is entered at **live**, on the **ball** appears at **ball**, and in **spite of** is shown at **spite**. When an idiom has more than one accepted form, it is entered at the first invariable meaningful word it contains. The alternative form is shown after an oblique (/):

**'seed ... n ... - go/run to seed ...**

### 1.4 Other entries

Abbreviations, and foreign phrases that are commonly used in English, are mostly listed in separate appendixes on pp 1630 and 1624. However, some abbreviations that are used like ordinary words, such as the noun **IOU** and the verb **KO**, and the many foreign words and phrases that have become thoroughly anglicized, such as **ad hoc** and **coup de grace**, are entered in their alphabetical places in the main body of the text.

## 2 Alternative versions of words

Many words come in pairs, or even trios, that may differ only in spelling (e.g. **judgment, judgement**), or in their ending (e.g. **excellence, excellency**), or even in the presence or absence of a complete word in a compound (e.g. **silk screen, silk screen printing**). In this dictionary, variant forms of a word are shown immediately after the main entry. When the variant is preceded by a comma, it is about as common as the main entry in current standard usage; when the variant is preceded by *also*, it is rather less common. These alternative forms are shown separately as main entries only if they fall more than ten places away from their main form in the alphabetical list.

Variant spellings of the *-ize/-ise* type are shown in abbreviated form at the main entry:

**computerize, -ise** ... *vt*

This means that **computerize** can also be spelt **computerise**.

Feminine forms of words are shown in the same way as other variants:

**author** ... *fem authoress* ... *n*

Individual meanings, as well as whole main entries, can have variant forms:

**excellence** *n* ... 1 ... 2 ... 3 **Excellency, Excellence** – used as a title for certain high dignitaries (eg ambassadors)

Variant forms that are entirely or partially restricted to British or American English are labelled *Br* or *NAm*:

**jail**, *Br also gaol* ... *n* ...

**gaol** ... *vb or n, chiefly Br (to) jail*

This means that the spelling **jail** is used everywhere in the English-speaking world, but British English also uses **gaol** (See 8.2).

If the variable part of a pair of words is shown as a main entry in its own right, then this variation is *not* shown in the entry for the word formed from it. Hence **hemorrhage**, the American variant spelling of **haemorrhage**, is not shown because **hemo-** is already entered as the American variant of **haemo-**.

## 3 Parts of speech

These are the various word classes to which the entries in this dictionary belong:

<i>adj</i>	adjective:	<b>energetic, durable</b>
<i>adv</i>	adverb:	<b>very, happily</b>
<i>comb form</i>	combining form:	<b>Anglo-, mal-, but-, insofar as</b>
<i>conj</i>	conjunction:	<b>hey, bravo</b>
<i>interj</i>	interjection:	<b>dynamite, bird of paradise</b>
<i>n</i>	noun:	<b>pre-, trans-</b>
<i>prefix</i>	preposition:	<b>for, according to</b>
<i>prep</i>		
<i>pron</i>	pronoun:	<b>herself, ours</b>
<i>suffix</i>		<b>-ful, -ness</b>

## trademark

<i>vb</i>	verb (both transitive and intransitive):
<i>vb impersonal</i>	impersonal verb:
<i>verbal auxiliary</i>	
<i>vi</i>	intransitive verb:
<i>vt</i>	transitive verb:

**Hoover, Valium, agglomerate, americanize, methinks, can, must, arise, arrive, indicate, thank**

Sometimes two parts of speech are combined:

**zilch** ... *adj or n, chiefly NAm zero*

**yelp** ... *vi or n (to utter) a sharp quick shrill cry*

## 4 Inflections

The dictionary shows inflections only if they are irregular or may cause difficulty. They are written out in full, unless they involve merely the doubling of a consonant or the change of *-c-* to *-ck-*:

**'swat** ... *vi -tt-*

**picnic** ... *vi -ck-*

This means that the present participle and past of **swat** are **swatting** and **swatted**, and those of **picnic** are **picnicking** and **picnicked**.

### 4.1 Nouns

Regular plurals of nouns (e.g. **cats, matches, spies**) are not shown. All other plurals (e.g. **louse, lice; sheep, sheep; putto, putti**) are given. Sometimes alternative plurals are possible:

**salmon** ... *n, pl salmon, esp for different types salmon*

or a plural may have an alternative pronunciation:

**'bath** /bəθ/ *n, pl baths* /bɑ:θs; *sense 3 often bɑ:ðz/*

Some plurals are regular but might have been expected to be irregular:

**colous** ... *n, pl colouses* ...

Nouns that are always plural are shown as follows:

**environs** ... *n pl* ...

Sometimes an individual sense of a noun is exclusively plural:

**'victual** ... *n ... 2 pl supplies of food; provisions*

Not all plural nouns always take a plural verb. This is shown as follows:

**genetics** *n but sing in constr* ...

**forty winks** *n pl but sing or pl in constr* ...

This means that one says 'Genetics is ...' but one says either 'Forty winks is ...' or 'Forty winks are ...'.

Some nouns have no recognizable plural form, but nevertheless can take a plural verb:

**police** *n ... 2a ... b pl in constr policemen*

**silent majority** *n sing or pl in constr* ...

This means that one says 'Several police are ...' but one says either 'The silent majority is ...' or '... are ...'.

Some nouns are used with the same meaning in the plural. They are shown like this:

**latitude** ... *n* ... a region as marked by its latitude – often pl with sing. meaning

This means that one can say 'It's very hot at this latitude' or '... at these latitudes.'

## 4.2 Verbs

Regular verb forms (e.g. **halted**, **cadged**, **carrying**) are not shown. All other verb inflections (e.g. **ring**, **rang**, **rung**) are shown, including those for verbs ending in a vowel other than -e, for verbs which keep a final -e before inflections, for verbs having alternative inflections, and where a pronunciation may be irregular.

Inflections are shown in the following order:

present: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person singular; plural; present subjunctive; present participle; past: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person singular; plural; past subjunctive; past participle.

Only the irregular inflections are shown. Certain forms (e.g. the entire past tense, or the past tense and the past participle) are combined if they are identical. Thus in

**run** ... *vb* -nn-; ran; run

the present participle is **running**, the entire past tense is **ran**, and the past participle is **run**.

Irregular American and archaic inflections are listed as separate entries in the dictionary, but are not shown at the main form of the verb.

## 4.3 Adjectives and adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs whose comparative and superlative are formed with **more** and **most**, or by adding -(e)r and -(e)st (e.g. **nicer**, **fastest**, **happier**) are not shown.

All other inflections are shown:

**good** ... *adj* better ... best ...

Inflections that involve a change of pronunciation are shown:

**young** /yung/ *adj* younger /'yung-gə/; youngest /'yung-gist/

So are alternative inflections:

**shy** ... *adj* shier, shyer; shiest, shyest ...

## 4.4 Pronouns

Inflections of pronouns are entered at their alphabetical place in the dictionary and cross-referred to their main form, where the definition is given:

**her** *pron, objective case of SHE*

## 5 Capitalization

Some words, or meanings of words, can be used with or without a capital letter, and we show this with the notes *often cap* and *often not cap*. In the case of compound words, the note specifies which parts are capitalized:

**pop art** *n, often cap P&A* ...

## 6 Definitions

### 6.1 The numbering of meanings

The main meanings of a word are numbered (1, 2, etc.). When a numbered main meaning of a word is divided into subsenses, they are introduced by letters (1a, b, c, etc.). Divisions of a subsense are indicated by bracketed numbers.

When a definition is followed by a colon and two or more subsenses, this indicates that the meaning of the subsenses is covered by the introductory definition.

Sometimes an introductory definition is simply the common element shared by the following subsenses:

**cheapen** ... *vb* to make or become a cheap in price or value **b** lower in esteem **c** tawdry, vulgar, or inferior

This indicates that **cheapen** means 'to make or become cheap in price and value', 'to make or become lower in esteem', and 'to make or become tawdry, vulgar, or inferior'.

When two meanings of a word are very closely related, they are not separated off with numbers or letters, but run together, with the word *esp.*, *specif.*, *also*, or *broadly* between them to show the way in which they are related:

**aggression** ... *n* ... **2** attack, encroachment; *esp* unprovoked violation by one country of the territory of another

### 6.2 The order of senses

Those meanings that would be understood anywhere in the English-speaking world are shown first, in their historical order: the older senses before the newer. After these come the meanings whose usage is restricted in some way (e.g. because they are used in only one area, or have gone out of current use).

### 6.3 Brackets

Round brackets are used in four main ways in definitions in this dictionary:

They enclose the object of a verb:

**contract** ... *vt* ... **2a** to catch (an illness)

They give extra information:

**nap** *n* a hairy or downy surface (e.g. on a woven fabric)

They separate the parts of a combined definition that relate to different parts of speech:

**cheep** ... *vi* or *n* (to utter) a faint shrill sound characteristic of a young bird

They enclose optional wording:

**afloat** ... *adj* or *adv* **1a** borne (as if) on the water or air

This indicates that **afloat** means both 'borne on the water or air' and 'borne as if on the water or air'.

## 6.4 Descriptive accounts

Sometimes, instead of giving a definition, the dictionary describes how a word is used:

<sup>2</sup>*after prep* ... 3 – used to indicate the goal or purpose of an action <*go ~ gold*>

Trademarked terms too are treated in this way

*Hoover* ... *trademark* – used for a vacuum cleaner

## 7 Examples

Definitions, particularly of words with several senses, may be followed by a phrase or sentence illustrating a typical use of the word in context. Many of these are actual quotations from a written, or spoken, source; in such cases the author or source is named.

Examples are printed in italics between angle brackets (< >). Occasionally the word being illustrated is written out in full, but usually it is represented by a swung dash (~). When an inflected form of the main entry is being illustrated, it is usually shown by a swung dash followed by the inflection:

<sup>1</sup>*dare* ... *vt* to confront boldly; defy <~ d *the anger of her family*>

The complete example is therefore 'dared the anger of her family'.

## 8 Usage

There is more to a complete description of a word than a definition of its meaning; many words have peculiarities of usage that a dictionary must take account of. They may be restricted to a particular geographical area; they may be colloquial or slang, or felt to be 'incorrect'; they may have fallen out of use; and there may be limitations on the sort of context they can be used in.

This dictionary shows such restrictions in two different ways. Words, or meanings, that are limited to a particular period or area are identified by an italic label:

*fain* *adv*, *archaic* 1 with pleasure ...

*howff* ... *n*, *Scot* a haunt, resort; *esp* a pub

When an italic label comes between the main entry and the first definition it refers to all meanings of the word; otherwise, it applies to all subsenses of the number or letter it follows.

All other information on usage is given in a note at the end of a definition:

*tootsy* ... *n* FOOT 1 – used chiefly to children

When such a note applies to all or several meanings of a word, it follows the last definition, and is introduced by the word *USE*.

### 8.1 Words that are no longer in current use

The label *obs* for 'obsolete' means there is no evidence of use for a word or meaning since 1755 (the date of publication of Samuel Johnson's Dictionary); this label is a comment on the word being defined, not on the thing it designates.

The label *archaic* means that a word or meaning once in common use is found today only in special

contexts, such as poetry or historical fiction, where it is used to introduce a flavour of the past.

Some of the more common archaisms that tend to linger on in poetic diction are treated more explicitly by means of a note:

*e'en* ... *adv* even – chiefly poetic

The same treatment is given to comparatively modern terms which have become old-fashioned because they belong to rapidly changing areas of vocabulary such as science and technology, or casual everyday speech:

*matron* ... *n* ... 3 a woman in charge of the nursing in a hospital – not now used technically  
*cripes* ... *interj*, *Br* – used to express surprise; no longer in vogue

### 8.2 Words that are not used throughout the English-speaking world

A word or sense limited in use to one or more of the countries of the English-speaking world is labelled accordingly:

<sup>3</sup>*crook* *adj*, *Austr* & *NZ* 1 ill, sick ...

The label *Br* indicates that a word or meaning is used in Britain and also usually the Commonwealth countries of Australasia. The label *NAm* indicates the use of a word or meaning in both the USA and Canada.

A word or meaning whose use is limited to a particular part of Britain, or occasionally of the USA, is labelled accordingly:

<sup>2</sup>*hinny* ... *n*, *Scot* & *N Eng* DEAR 1b  
*you'-all* *pron*, chiefly *S US* you

The label *dial* for 'dialect' indicates that a word or meaning belongs to the common local speech of several different places.

### 8.3 Words that suggest a particular style, attitude, or level of formality

Most English words can be generally used in both speech and writing, but some would be traditionally described as 'colloquial' or 'slang', and others, perhaps, as 'formal'.

Words of this sort are identified by notes at the end of definitions. It is always hard to apply such descriptions consistently, since the status of these words is constantly shifting with the passage of time, and they are also frequently used in an incongruous setting for stylistic effect.

The note '—informal' is used for words or senses that are characteristic of conversational speech and casual writing (e.g. between friends and contemporaries) rather than of official or 'serious' speech or writing.

The note '—slang' is used for words or meanings found in contexts of extreme informality. Such words may be, or may have been until recently, used by a particular social group such as criminals or drug users. They often refer to topics that are thought of as risqué or 'low'.

At the opposite end of the scale, the note '—formal', for 'formal', is used for words or meanings characteristic of written rather than spoken English, and particularly of official or academic writings.

Some notes describe the attitude or tone of the user of a word:

**egghead** ... *n* an intellectual, highbrow – derog or humor  
**pass away** *vi* ... 2 to die – euph

## 8.4 Words that are not 'correct'

It is not the role of a responsible modern dictionary to dictate usage; it can only make statements, based on reference to a large stock of spoken and written data, about how a word is being used by the community at large. It can always warn the dictionary user that a use of a word is likely to arouse controversy or disapproval. Many people would disapprove of the use of some of the words we have described as 'slang' or 'informal', and there are of course many contexts in which their use would be quite inappropriate; but there is a further distinct class of words that are generally felt to be 'incorrect'.

The note '– nonstandard' is used for words or meanings that are quite commonly used in standard English but are considered incorrect by many speakers:

**flaunt** ... *vi* ... 2 to flout – nonstandard

Certain highly controversial words or meanings have the warning note '– disapproved of by some speakers':

**disinterested** *adj* 1 uninterested – disapproved of by some speakers

The note '– substandard' is used for words or meanings that are widely used but are not part of standard English:

**learn** ... *vb* ... 2 to teach – substandard

## 8.5 The context in which a word can appear

Many words or meanings can be used only in certain contexts within a sentence: some verbs are only used in the passive; some words can appear only in the negative, along with **not**, **never**, etc; others are always used with particular prepositions or adverbs, or in certain fixed phrases. Such restrictions are shown in a note following a definition:

**abide** ... *vb* 1 to bear patiently; tolerate – used negatively

**agree** ... *vi* ... 2a to be of one mind – often + *with* set <I ~ with you>

**dumps** ... *n pl* a gloomy state of mind; despondency – esp in *the dumps*

Sometimes a word that is commonly used with the main entry word in a sentence is printed in *italic* within the definition:

**allude** ... *vi* to make indirect, casual, or implicit reference to

**altogether** *n* the nude <posed in the ~> – infml

This means that **allude** is almost always used in the phrase **allude to**, and that the noun **altogether** is almost always used with **the**.

## 9 Cross-references

Cross-references draw attention to a related word in another part of the dictionary. Any word printed in **SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS** is a cross-reference.

An entire definition may take the form of a cross-reference. This happens either when the word used in the definition has more than one meaning, and it is necessary to specify which meaning is referred to:

**flash** *n* ... **6a** ... **c** FLASHLIGHT 2

or when the word used in the definition is a compound that is a main entry in the dictionary:

**rubella** ... *n* GERMAN MEASLES

A cross-reference to a related entry, or one that may give additional information, is introduced by 'compare':

Entries followed by an eye symbol **●** cross-refer to an illustration or table on the facing page:

**music** ... *n* ... 3 the score of a musical composition set down on paper **USE ●**

Entries followed by a hand symbol **✎** cross-refer to an illustration or table appearing at a main entry elsewhere in the dictionary:

**air marshal** *n* ✎ RANK

## 10 Prefixes, suffixes, and combining forms

Word elements that can be used to form new words in English are entered at their alphabetical place in the dictionary. These elements are prefixes (e.g. **pre-**, **un-**), suffixes (e.g. **-ous**, **-ly**), and combining forms (e.g. **Anglo-**, **-logy**).

Suffixes and combining forms added to the end of a word may alter the grammatical function as well as the meaning of the word. Where appropriate, this change of part of speech is indicated as follows:

**-ful suffix** (*n*→*adj*) full of <eventful> <colourful>

This means that the suffix **-ful** is added to nouns to make adjectives.

## 11 Pronunciation

Most of us have at some time had a disagreement about the pronunciation of a word, or perhaps we have simply come across a new word when reading and have wanted to know how it is pronounced. Unfortunately, when we look the word up in a dictionary we are often confronted with a baffling series of symbols. The pronunciation entries in this dictionary are concise and easy to understand, since they are based almost entirely on English spelling, and special characters or marks have been avoided.

### 11.1 Type of pronunciation represented

The dictionary attempts to give all the most common variant pronunciations of each word. It is not, however, possible to include all the regional and social variants, and so the pronunciation represented here is what may be called a 'standard' or 'neutral British English' accent: the type of speech characteristic of those people often described as having 'no accent'. A better definition would be that it is an accent that betrays nothing of the region to which the speaker belongs.