

*New Edition*

THE CONCISE  
OXFORD  
DICTIONARY

THE  
CONCISE OXFORD  
DICTIONARY  
OF CURRENT ENGLISH

Based on  
The Oxford English Dictionary  
and its Supplements

First edited by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler

SIXTH EDITION  
edited by J. B. SYKES

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## PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

IN this sixth edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* the changes made include revisions and additions resulting from a detailed scrutiny of the whole work, as well as modifications of typography and format to allow greater ease of use. Such a thorough recension has been possible because I have had access to the reference library and the very large collection of examples built up for the *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* now in course of publication, and to the advice of members of the O.E.D. department and other officers of the Oxford University Press.

The opportunity has been taken to eliminate some matter that can no longer be regarded as pertaining to current English, to add many new words, phrases, and meanings that have entered the language in recent years (including technical expressions found in general literature), to increase the contribution from the English-speaking world outside the British Isles, to incorporate the appendix of abbreviations into the main list, to systematize the definitions of interrelated terms, to eliminate some duplication of definitions, to expand some unduly concise wordings, and to add an enlarged Introduction (which the reader is strongly recommended to study) explaining the use of the dictionary.

In these tasks I have been ever conscious of the extent to which I depended on the labours of others: my predecessors H. W. and F. G. Fowler, the first editors (1911), H. W. Fowler in the second edition (1929) and (with H. G. Le Mesurier) the third edition (1934), and E. McIntosh in the fourth (1951) and fifth (1964) editions; and my contemporaries on the staff of the Oxford dictionaries, especially the Chief Editor, Mr. Robert W. Burchfield, C.B.E., for much valuable guidance, Miss Joyce Hawkins for several years' devoted assistance and counsel, Mrs. Joan Pusey (Editor of the *Oxford School Dictionary*) and Dr. Rashid Ball for detailed comments and practical help, Miss Sandra Raphael for advice on some botanical points, and Mrs. Anne Whear for many hours' typing and other help. I have also had great benefit from the work of Dr. G. W. S. Friedrichsen mentioned under 'Etymology' in the Introduction, from Mrs. Dorothy Eagle's revision of the *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* (1975), and (like all lexicographers of the present day) from the third edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary*. Thanks are due to Mrs. W. K. Davin, Mr. M. W. Grose, and Mr. T. F. Hoad, who each read a substantial section of the galley proofs and made many valuable comments, and to a very large number of correspondents who have written to comment on individual entries or general topics; of them I would specially mention Mr. A. R. Babcock of Summit, New Jersey, the sender of frequent and interesting lists of suggestions since 1972.

## PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

I must confess, with Henry Fowler in his acknowledgements preceding the 1929 edition, that 'a dictionary-maker, unless he is a monster of omniscience, must deal with a great many matters of which he has no firsthand knowledge', and consequently expect to be found 'guilty of errors and omissions in some of these'. To those who will take the trouble to inform me of such shortcomings, and so help the further improvement of this attempt to summarize and present in a small dictionary one of the great languages of the world, I here express my thanks in advance.

J. B. S.

July, 1975

*From the*

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE book is designed as a dictionary, and not as an encyclopaedia; that is, the uses of words and phrases as such are its subject matter, and it is concerned with giving information about the things for which those words and phrases stand only so far as correct use of the words depends upon knowledge of the things. The degree of this dependence varies greatly with the kind of word treated, the difference between cyclopaedic and dictionary treatment varies with it, and the line of distinction is accordingly a fluctuating and dubious one. It is to the endeavour to discern and keep to this line that we attribute whatever peculiarities we are conscious of in this dictionary as compared with others of the same size. One of these peculiarities is the large amount of space given to the common words that no one goes through the day without using scores or hundreds of times, often disposed of in a line or two on the ground that they are plain and simple and that every one knows all about them by the light of nature, but in fact entangled with other words in so many alliances and antipathies during their perpetual knocking about the world that the idiomatic use of them is far from easy; chief among such words are the prepositions, the conjunctions, the pronouns, and such 'simple' nouns and verbs as *hand* and *way*, *go* and *put*. Another peculiarity is the use, copious for so small a dictionary, of illustrative sentences as a necessary supplement to definition when a word has different senses between which the distinction is fine, or when a definition is obscure and unconvincing until exemplified; these sentences often are, but still more often are not, quotations from standard authors; they are meant to establish the sense of the definition by appeal not to external authority, but to the reader's own consciousness, and therefore their source, even when authoritative, is not named. A third and a fourth peculiarity are the

direct results of the preceding ones; if common words are to be treated at length, and their uses to be copiously illustrated, space must be saved both by the curtest possible treatment of all that are either uncommon or fitter for the encyclopaedia than the dictionary, and by the severest economy of expression—amounting to the adoption of telegraphese—that readers can be expected to put up with.

H. W. F.

F. G. F.

*June, 1911*

*From the*  
PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

WHEN we began, more than twenty years ago, the work that took shape as *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, we were plunging into the sea of lexicography without having been first taught to swim. But lexicography for us was fortunately of the minor or dependent kind; and, fortunately also, the time was one at which the major or firsthand kind was reaching greater excellence than ever before, and the *Oxford English Dictionary*, four-fifths completed, already provided popularizers with unlimited material.

The object we set before us, hinted at by the word *current* on our title-page, was to present as vivid a picture as the small dictionary could be made to give of the English that was being spoken and written at the time. The vividness was to be secured by allotting space to words more nearly in proportion to the frequency and variety of their use, and consequently to their practical value, than had been the custom; and further by an unprecedented abundance of illustrative quotation; define, and your reader gets a silhouette; illustrate, and he has it 'in the round'. That at least was our belief; and we hailed as confirmation of it one or two letters from persons unknown congratulating us on having 'produced a live dictionary', or 'treating English at last as a living language'.

H. W. F.

*1929*

# INTRODUCTION

THIS introduction is designed to help the reader understand the way in which information is presented in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, where, as the name suggests, compactness has been a primary aim. Although many changes have been made in the sixth edition, users acquainted with previous editions will not find much that is unfamiliar as regards the style.

## I. *Vocabulary*

The general aims of the dictionary have remained as they were specified by the original editors. The words, phrases, and meanings given are those current in the English of the present day—either in living use, or familiar through their occurrence in frequently quoted literature of the past. The attitude taken, however, is now essentially descriptive rather than prescriptive: that is, the dictionary seeks to record what is found to exist in the educated use of modern English. Restricted usage is regularly shown by usage labels such as (literary) and (colloq.) or subject labels such as (Law) and (Cricket); see paragraph iv. Admission has also been granted to many vulgar or slang expressions that are often met in print, or heard, at the present time. Limitations of space make it impossible to include every possible and legitimate derivative (e.g. compounds of obvious meaning such as *boiler-room*, the obvious literal senses where the figurative meaning is more important, the less common adverbs in *-ly*, or phrase-based compounds such as *arm-twisting* from *twist a person's arm*). Likewise, standard grammatical procedures such as the attributive use of nouns, or the intransitive use of transitive verbs as notional passives (*the car handles well*) are not often mentioned. The reader in search of a broader canvas of English words and their history is recommended to consult the twelve-volume *Oxford English Dictionary* and its Supplements on which this work is based, the intermediate abridgement in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, the encyclopaedic matter in the *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*, and such specialized works as the Oxford Companions to art, English literature, music, and the theatre.

## II. *Arrangement of dictionary entries*

For conciseness, derivatives and compounds are often put in the entry headed by their first element, even if this brings them out of their alphabetical position. It is therefore advisable to seek any word in its alphabetical place and then (if necessary) in the entry for its first part, for example *ant-eater* under *ant*, *playboy* under *play*<sup>2</sup>. Cross-references are provided where the placing of a word may not be obvious; here, as in all other cross-references, the word to which reference is necessary is printed in SMALL CAPITALS. Raised figures (as in *PLAY*<sup>2</sup>) are used to distinguish two or more entry words having the same spelling; plain

figures (as in FLOW 3) refer to bold-type arabic sense-numbers (see paragraph II). There are separate entries for the principal prefixes and suffixes, and cross-reference to these is often made for the explanation of derivative forms; for instance, most adverbs in *-ly* are entered with *-LY*<sup>2</sup>, and similarly for nouns in *-NESS*, and verbs in *-IZE* (1) etc. (where the figure indicates the specific meaning among those listed in the entry for *-IZE*). Cross-references are also used to clarify the sense of an ambiguous word in a definition (as *PIKE*<sup>3</sup>, the fish, at *jack*<sup>1</sup> 6), to indicate an entry where further relevant information may be found (as *LIBEL* at *slander*), and to lead to definitions of phrases such as *let SLEEP*<sup>2</sup>*ing dogs lie*, which are usually defined under only one of their constituent words; such a phrase or compound is not itself a sense of the entry word unless preceded by an equals sign (for example *paper*<sup>1</sup>. . . = *NEWS-paper* implies that 'paper' can mean 'newspaper'; *hare*. . . *BELGIAN hare*; = *ELECTRIC hare* implies that 'hare' alone can mean 'electric hare' but not 'Belgian hare').

### III. Structure of entries

The entry word (headword) is printed in **bold** type, or in **bold italic** if it is not yet naturalized in English and is usually found in italics in printed matter. Alternative forms are shown either by the use of parentheses as at **rac(c)oon** (where the position of the entry implies that the spelling *raccoon* is given preference over *racoon*) or by placing them, either in full or abbreviated, after a comma (**carcass, carcasse; pygmy, pigmy; organize, -ise**). These are followed by any necessary indication of the pronunciation where it cannot be shown in the headword itself (see 'Pronunciation' below), by the italic abbreviation for the part or parts of speech (*n.* for noun, etc.), and by an indication of any irregular inflexions (see 'Inflexion' below). The order of senses is normally based on frequency and convenience rather than historical evolution. The definitions of the senses of a word are separated by commas if very close in meaning, by semicolons if somewhat more distinct, and by bold-type arabic numbers (1.) if quite distinct. When an entry deals with more than one part of speech, the relevant part-of-speech abbreviation follows 1., and any subsequent number where it changes. Derivatives are in **bold** type (often partly replaced by the swung dash—see paragraph v—and by small capitals—see paragraph II); defined compounds and phrases in **semi-bold** (or in **bold italic** where not yet naturalized); examples and expressions defined by cross-reference, in *italic*. Definitions may include words in *italic* that are normally used with the headword in the sense concerned: '**contingent** . . . incidental *to*' implies that the idiomatic construction for this sense is *contingent to*; '**soak** . . . place or leave or lie in or in liquid' implies that either *soak* or *soak in water* etc. can be used for this sense; '**gather** . . . infer, deduce, (*that*)' implies that the word *gather* may, but need not, be used with a clause beginning with the conjunc-



tion *that*. Italicized examples may include words in ordinary (roman) type that are replaceable by others: *pull one's weight* covers *pull my weight*, *pull his weight*, and so on; *pull person's leg* is used similarly, where the person is not the subject of the verb. The etymology is at the end of the entry, in square brackets [ ] (see 'Etymology' below). Round brackets ( ) may be used anywhere in the entry to enclose letters or words that are optional or explanatory, for example definitions that are explanatory rather than formal; '(of . . .)' often precedes the definition of a verb or adjective to indicate the type of noun to which it can be applied, and a definition of a transitive verb may be followed by words in round brackets indicating the type of noun that occurs as its object. The expression 'in vbl senses' denotes 'in senses that may be deduced from the meanings of the corresponding verb'; 'abs.' refers to the use of a transitive verb without object, an adjective without noun, etc. (see ABSOLUTELY). Systematic names of animals and plants are given where they are appropriate as a guide to further information in specialized books on mammals, ferns, etc. (Here, as in definitions, 'etc.' is used to denote other items of the same general kind.)

#### iv. Usage and subject labels

Words (usually abbreviated) in round brackets ( ) preceding a definition are used to show that all or some of the senses are restricted to a particular type of discourse or subject field in current English. The principal usage labels are (colloq.): colloquial, not used in formal discourse, but widely used and entirely acceptable in informal circumstances; (sl.): slang, used only in certain circumstances (see SLANG); (joc.): jocular, used only in humorous or playful style; (derog.): derogatory, used only contemptuously; (vulg.): vulgar, used only by those who have no wish to be thought either polite or educated; (arch.): archaic, used only in old-fashioned (or religious or legal) speech or writing; (literary): in sense 2 as given at LITERARY. See p. xxiii for the geographical restrictions denoted by the symbols \* and ||. The many subject labels, such as (Law), (Math.), (Naut.) (see the list of 'Abbreviations used in the Dictionary', p. xx), show that a word or sense is current only in a particular field of activity. When preceding all numbered senses, labels apply to the whole entry; when followed by a definition beginning with a capital letter, they apply as far as the next full stop; otherwise, as far as the next semicolon or full stop. Proprietary terms are treated as described in the note on p. xxiii.

#### v. The swung dash

A considerable amount of space is saved by the swung dash ~, which stands for the headword of the entry (or any of the alternative spellings of the headword) or for that part of it which precedes the vertical rule: for example, in the entry at **hair**. ~ stands for *hair*, ~'brush for *hair'brush*, (-)~ed for *haired* or *-haired*; at **hungr|y**, ~y stands for *hungry*, ~ily for *hungrily*. Where the headword begins or ends with a

hyphen, the swung dash does not include that hyphen (at **inter-**, ~stellar = *interstellar*, but ~-city = *inter-city*); a capital or small letter preceding the swung dash replaces an initial small or capital letter in the headword (at **genesis**, G~ = *Genesis*; at **Renaissance**, r~ = *renaissance*). Any indication of pronunciation or stress corresponding to the relevant part of the headword is transmitted by the swung dash unless cancelled by a respelling in round brackets or by a new stress (thus ~A'TION cancels the main stress on the first syllable of **co'git|ate**, **to'ler|ate**, etc.); otherwise, the normal pronunciation rules are implied (at **impact**, ~ion is pronounced -shon; the second *c* in *caecitis* is pronounced *s* as usual before *i*, although in **caec|um** it is pronounced *k*; the plural ~e (= *nebulae*) at **nebula** is pronounced nə'bülē (see 'Pronunciation')).

#### VI. *Hyphenation*

There is great variety in the use of the hyphen in English, especially between British and American styles, and there are few clearly defined rules on the subject. To clarify the intention in this dictionary (which conforms essentially to the British style), a hyphen that falls at the end of a line is repeated at the start of the next line to make clear that it is not simply the result of the printing convention whereby any word so divided is hyphenated.

#### VII. *Entries for abbreviations in general use*

These are to be found in their alphabetical places among ordinary words, the ampersand (&) being treated as if written 'and'. There are frequent variations in the presence or absence of capitals and full stops in abbreviations, and no attempt is made to show all possible forms. Abbreviations not in general use but employed in this dictionary are listed at p. xx below.

## PRONUNCIATION

The pronunciation given in this dictionary is the standard one 'without any accent', associated especially with Southern England (sometimes called 'Received Pronunciation'). No attempt is made here to show the many variations heard in educated speech in Northern England, the rest of the British Isles, the United States, and the rest of the English-speaking world. Further information may be sought in dictionaries concerned primarily with pronunciation.

Where possible, the pronunciation is shown in the bold type of the headword that begins each entry, or of a derivative within an entry. If not, part or all of the word is respelt in round brackets ( ) immediately following it. Occasionally a group of forms is followed by a comma and then by a respelling that relates to the whole group. The pronunciation of a derivative formed by a suffix printed in small

capitals is often to be found by means of the marking or respelling at the suffix entry. No attempt is made to show syllables or to indicate suitable points of division of words at the end of printed lines.

### 1. With respelling

Respelling in round brackets is according to the following scheme, which also shows the corresponding symbols in the International Phonetic Alphabet. See section iv below for the use of the stress-mark '.

Consonants		IPA		IPA
b	as in (băt)	b	ng	as in (sĩng)
ch	as in (chĩn)	tʃ	ngg	as in (fĩ'ngger) =
d	as in (dõg)	d		finger
dh	as in (dhẽn) = then	ð	p	as in (pět)
f	as in (făt)	f	r	as in (răt)
g	(except after n) as in (gõ)	g	s	as in (sĩp)
h	(except after c, d, s, t, z) as in (hăt)	h	sh	as in (shĩp)
j	as in (jăm)	dʒ	t	as in (tĩp)
k	as in (kĩt)	k	th	as in (thĩn)
l	as in (lõt)	l	v	as in (văn)
m	as in (măt)	m	w	as in (wĩn)
n	as in (nět)	n	y	as in (yět)
ñ	(French nasalization) as in (gâr'sawn) = <i>garçon</i> etc.		z	as in (zĩp)
	(ã, ẽ, etc.)		zh	as in (vĩ'zhon)
				= vision
			χ	(Scots etc.) as in (lõχ)
				= loch

### Vowels

ā	as in (făt) = fate	ei	ō	as in (gõt) = goat	əu
ă	as in (făt)	æ	õ	as in (gõt)	o
a	as in (agõ')	ə	o	as in (flă'gon)	ə
ah	as in (bah)	ɑ	oi	as in (boil)	ɔi
ār	as in (fār) = fare	eə(r)	ōō	as in (bōōt)	u
âr	as in (fâr)	ɑ(r)	ōō	as in (bōōk)	ʊ
aw	as in (paw)	ɔ	oor	as in (poor)	uə(r)
ē	as in (mēt) = meet	i	ôr	as in (pōrt)	ɔ(r)
ě	as in (mět)	e	ow	as in (brow)	əu
e	as in (tõ'ken)	ə	owr	as in (sowr) = sour	əuə(r)
ēr	as in (fēr) = fear	ɪə(r)	ū	as in (dū) = due	ju
ēr	as in (fēr) = fur	ʒ(r)	ũ	as in (dũg)	ʌ
er	as in (tā'ker)	ə(r)	u	as in (bõ'nus)	ə
ī	as in (bīt) = bite	ɑi	ūr	as in (pūr) = pure	juə(r)
ĩ	as in (bīt)	ɪ	See ñ (under 'Consonants' above) for French nasalized vowels.		
i	as in (bă'sin)	ə			
īr	as in (fīr) = fire	ɑiə(r)			

Vowels such as *ǎ* may be pronounced in two ways, e.g. either as *ā* or as *ǎ* (*pǎ'triot*); similarly (*zě'bra*). Vowel combinations in -*r* include the consonantal value of *r* when followed by another vowel in the next syllable or word (*fearing, fear it*). Apart from this, the vowels *a, e, i, o, u*, and *er* are usually indistinguishable except in very precise speech.

## II. Without respelling

Words or parts of words that are not respelt are pronounced in accordance with the foregoing scheme—for example: *bǎ'nish, stū'diō, rī'nger*, but *fī'nger* (-ngg-), *dā'nger* (-nj-)—together with the symbols and values stated in the following seven rules.

1. *ě* = *ī* (*nǎ'kěd*)  
*īr* = *ēr* (*būrth*)  
*ūr* = *ēr* (*būrn*)  
*ȳ* = *ī* (*rěly'*)  
*ȳ* = *ī* (*dū'tȳ*)  
*ȳr* = *īr* (*tyre*)
2. *e* final is silent (*ǎ'ctive, āpe, galōr'e*; cf. *rě'cǐpě*); -*le* final after a consonant = -*el* (*cǎ'ble, stǎ'ple, mǎ'ntle*).
3. Unmarked vowels (other than final *e*), if not respelt and not part of a compound vowel (*ah* etc.), correspond to *a* etc. above (*agō', tō'ken, bǎ'sin, flǎ'gon, bō'nus*); *y* (except in *yr*) = *y* (consonant); *ar* etc. = *er* (*partī'cūlar, mā'ker, tā'pir, sai'lor, lē'mur, zě'phyr*).
4. A doubled consonant is pronounced as single (*sī'llȳ, hǎ'ppen, bū'tter, būtt*). This applies also to the combinations *ck* (= *k*), *cq*, *dg(e, i, y)*, *dj*, *sc(e, i, y)*, *tch*, *xe(e, i, y)*, *xs, ārr, arr*, etc.
5. The following letters and combinations have the values shown:  
*ae* = *ē* (*ae'gis*)  
*ai* = *ā* (*pain*)  
*air* = *ār* (*fair*)  
*au* = *aw* (*maul*)  
*aur* = *ōr* (*dī'nosaur*)  
*ay* = *ā* (*say*)  
*c* before *e, i, ȳ, ȳ* is 'soft' and = *s* (*īce, cī'tȳ, ī'cȳ, cȳ'der*), elsewhere is 'hard' and = *k* (*cōb, cry, arc*)  
*ea* = *ē* (*mean*)  
*ear* = *ēr* (*fear*)  
*ee* = *ē* (*meet*)  
*eer* = *ēr* (*beer*)  
*eu* = *ū* (*feud*)  
*ew* = *ū* (*few*)

**g** before **e, i, ĳ, ȳ** is 'soft' and = **j** (**āge, ġin, or'gȳ, gȳbe**), elsewhere is 'hard' and = **g** (**gāme, bāg, or'gan**)

**ie** = **ē** (**thief**)

**ier** = **ēr** (**pier**)

**n** before 'hard' **c, k, q, x** = **ng** (**zīnc, ũ'ncle, tǎnk, bǎ'nquét, mīnx**)

**oa** = **ō** (**boat**)

**oar** = **ōr** (**boar**)

**ou** = **ow** (**bound**)

**our** = **owr** (**sour**)

**oy** = **oi** (**boy**)

**ph** = **f** (**phō'tō**)

**qu** = **kw** (**quīt**)

**tion** = **shon** (**nā'tion, nǎ'tional**)

**wh** = **w** (**whīch**) or (by some speakers) **hw** (not shown in respelling)

**x** = **ks** (**fōx**)

6. The following combinations, beginning a word, have the values shown:

**kn-** = **n** (**knōt**)

**rh-** = **r** (**rhȳme**)

**wr-** = **r** (**wrīst**)

7. The following, ending a word, have the values shown:

**-age** = **ij** (**vī'llage**)

**-ate** = **at** (**dē'licate**) or (by some speakers) **It**

**-e** (see 2 above)

**-ey** = **i** (**dō'nkey**)

**-le** (see 2 above)

**-nch** = **nch** or **nsh** (**trēnch**)

**-ous** = **us** (**fūr'ious**), and similarly for **-ously, -ousness**

**-sm** = **zem** (**spǎ'sm**)

**-ture** = **cher** or (sometimes, esp. in less common words) **tūr**

Note that all the above rules may be overridden by respelling, for example **shri'llȳ** (-l-lī), **break** (-āk), **gēt** (g-), **quay** (kē), **fā'vour** (-ver), **grā'teful** (-tf-), **ahea'd** (a-hē'd), **lōō'phōle** (-p-h-), the hyphen being used to make it clear that letters are to be taken separately and not as parts of combined symbols.

Where a word has no marking at all, its pronunciation will be found within the entry (**housewife**), or (in the case of a cross-reference) at the principal word. Acronyms are usually pronounced either as words (if thus shown by respelling) or as sequences of letters; other abbreviations are usually pronounced as their full forms. See 'Inflexion' below for a description of the pronunciations of inflected forms of words.

The occasional accents on letters as in **attaché, fête**, should not be confused with pronunciation markings.

III. *Alternative pronunciations*

Semicolons in the respelling separate different parts of the word, as in **brea'thalýser** (brě'-; -zer). Alternative accepted pronunciations are introduced by the word *or*, and their order is not necessarily that of decreasing frequency of occurrence.

Unstressed vowels often have a reduced value, for example (ū) becoming (yoo) in **cīr'cūlar**. The combinations of (i) with preceding c, s, t; d, g, j; z, when followed by a vowel, are often palatalized into (sh, j, zh) respectively (as is normal in *acacia*, *Alsatian*, etc.); similarly, (i) followed by a vowel tends to become consonantal (y), and (tū), (dū) tend to become (chōō) or (chōō), (jōō) or (jōō), when not beginning a word or stressed syllable.

In speech at normal speed the indeterminate vowel in words ending in **-ble**, **-den**, **-gon**, **-sm**, **-thm**, and the like, is often barely discernible.

IV. *Stress*

The usual main stress is shown by a stress-mark ' after the stressed vowel. No attempt is made to show secondary stress, and even the main stress may change when the word is used in different positions, e.g. *Chi'nese*, *i'deal* attributively, *Chine'se*, *ide'al* predicatively, or when a compound is used in different positions.

Unless otherwise shown, the stress falls on the first part of a hyphenated compound; it is usually on the second part of a compound written as two words. Where the swung dash ~ (see Introduction, paragraph v) is used, it may be followed immediately by a stress-mark to indicate a stress on the syllable it represents, or a suffix may have the stress-mark; otherwise, the stress is the same as in the word or part-word represented by the swung dash.

## INFLEXION

The following are the rules for the formation of normal inflected forms of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs, and are applicable except where a different form is shown in round brackets ( ) in the dictionary entry immediately after the part-of-speech abbreviation *n.*, *a.*, *v.*, *v.t.*, etc. The absence of any such different form is to be taken (for example at **virus** *n.*, **jacket** *v.t.*, and **parallel**<sup>2</sup> *v.t.*) as implying that the inflected forms are in accordance with the rules given below; the word *or* indicates the existence of more than one accepted form, not necessarily arranged in order of decreasing frequency of occurrence.

In these rules, 'sibilant wds' denotes all words ending in the sound of s (or x), z, sh (or ch), or zh (or j); '-o wds' denotes all words ending in the letter o except those in -oo; '-e wds' denotes all words ending in a silent e; and '-y wds' denotes all words ending in the letter y preceded by a consonant, together with those in -quy.

1. *Plural of nouns*

Sibilant wds add *-es*, pronounced (ɪz), *-e* wds dropping the *e*: *boxes, cases, mazes, porches*; *-y* wds change *-y* into *-ies*, pronounced (ɪz): *puppies*, or (ɪz): *skies*; *-o* wds add *-s* or *-es*, pronounced (-z), as shown in round brackets in the dictionary for all such words except those where no plural is in use (e.g. *blanco, quattrocento*); other nouns add *-s*, pronounced (s) after voiceless consonants (*books, cats, cliffs, faiths, hopes*) and (z) after voiced consonants and vowel sounds (*bags, hoods, knaves, scythes, tubs, views, ways*). A compound consisting of a noun followed by a word other than a noun usually adds the plural ending to the noun (*courts martial, passers-by*). Abbreviations etc. add *-s* (*M.P.s, 1960s*) or sometimes *'s*; some abbreviations of units remain unchanged (*m. = mile or miles*).

II. *Possessive of nouns*

Singular nouns add *'s*, pronounced (-ɪz) for sibilant wds (*fox's, goose's, witch's*), (s) after other voiceless consonants (*book's, cat's*), and (z) after other voiced consonants and vowel sounds (*boy's, dog's, man's*). Plural nouns not ending in the sound of *s* or *z* are treated like singular nouns (*men's, women's, sheep's*). Plural nouns ending in the sound of *s* or *z* add an apostrophe without change of pronunciation (*books', cats', boys', beaux'*); the same is sometimes done with singular nouns of this type (*for goodness' sake*). Abbreviations etc. add *'s* (*M.P.'s*, in plural *M.P.s'*; *1960's*).

III. *Comparative and superlative of adjectives and adverbs*

The syllables *-ER*<sup>3</sup> and *-EST*<sup>1</sup> are added to adjectives and adverbs of one syllable (*bolder, boldest; faster, fastest*), *-e* wds dropping the *e* (*braver, bravest; later, latest*), and a final single consonant (except *h, w, or x*) being doubled, without change of pronunciation, if preceded by a single-letter vowel (*grimmer, fattest; bigger* pr. bɪ'gɜr). The same applies to adjectives of two syllables that are *-y* wds, the *y* becoming *i* (*happier, luckiest*; similarly for some *-ey* wds such as *goose: gooier*), to some adverbs of this type, especially *early*; to adjectives of two syllables ending in *-er, -le* after a consonant, or *-ow* (*cleverer, tenderest, nobler, simplest, narrower, mellowest*); and to negative forms of adjectives of all the types mentioned so far (*unfairest, ignobler, unluckiest*). The comparative and superlative of all other adjectives and adverbs must (except where otherwise shown), and those of any adjective or adverb may, be formed by prefixing *more* and *most* (*more beautiful, most splendid, most unfair, more brave, most nobly*). Similar rules apply to the formation of derived adjectives in *-ISH*<sup>1</sup> (*fattish, biggish, yellowish*; but *prettyish*).

iv. *Third person singular present indicative of verbs*

Sibilant wds (-e wds dropping the *e*) and -o wds add -es, pronounced (ɪz) and (z) respectively: *pushes, places, goes*; -y wds change -y into -ies, pronounced (ɪz): *carries*, or (ɪz): *cries*; other verbs add -s, pronounced (s) after voiceless consonants (*bakes, cuts, peeps*) and (z) after voiced consonants and vowel sounds (*begs, boos, fades, rubs, stays, ties, wallows*).

v. *Past tense and past participle of verbs*

-e wds add -d (*moved*); -y wds change -y into -ied, pronounced (ɪd): *carried*, or (ɪd): *cried*; other verbs add -ed; the final -ed is pronounced (ɪd) after the sound of t or d (*trusted, hated, ended, faded*), (t) after other voiceless consonants (*baked, peeped, pushed*), and (d) after other voiced consonants and vowel sounds (*absorbed, booed, seemed, stayed, vetoed, wallowed*). A final single consonant is often doubled (cf. paragraph III above), but this is always indicated in the dictionary by (-bb-) etc. (*rubbed, tinned, mimicked, preferred; sagged, tugged*, pr. -gd). There are many irregular forms; if the past tense and past participle are different, they are separated by a semicolon (**ran; run**); a single form stands for both (**brought, cut, found**). In archaic and poetical use, -ed after a voiceless consonant may be written -t, the consonant never being doubled (*blest, kist, wrapt*). Some past participles when used as adjectives have different forms (*drunken*) or pronunciations in (-ɪd) (*blessed, learned*); this pronunciation also occurs in archaic and poetical use (*the horned Moon*) and for some derived adverbs in -edly (*advisedly*). Similar rules apply to the formation of derived nouns in -ER<sup>1</sup> (*carrier, winner*) and adjectives in -ABLE (*carriable, winnable*).

vi. *Present participle and gerund of verbs*

All verbs add -ing (*fishing, playing, studying*), -e wds (except those in -ee, -ie, -oe) dropping the *e* (*dancing, moving; seeing*). A final single consonant is often doubled (cf. paragraph III above), but this is always indicated in the dictionary by (-bb-) etc. (*rubbing, tinning, mimicking, sitting, preferring; sagging, tugging*, pr. -gɪŋ).

vii. *Archaic second and third person singular of verbs*

These are formed in -(e)st for the second person singular present and past (*playest, canst, hearest, hear'st; madest, knewest, haddest, hadst, wouldst*), and -(e)th for the third person singular present indicative (*goeth, saith*). They are retained in some religious, legal, poetical, and dialectal usage.



## ETYMOLOGY

The word-derivations given in this dictionary are based almost entirely on those by Dr. G. W. S. Friedrichsen in the previous edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* and in the 1973 printing of the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, but he does not bear any responsibility for the exact formulations used here. More detailed information may be sought in the latter of those works and in the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* by Onions, Friedrichsen, and Burchfield (1966).

The etymology is given in square brackets [ ] at the end of nearly every entry. It begins with 'f.' (= from) or 'f. as' (= formed from the same source as) except where the word in the immediate source (foreign) language has exactly the same form as in English (in which case that form is not repeated in the etymology: at **formula**, [L . . .] means [f. Latin *formula* . . .]; at **basis**, [L f. Gk . . .] means [f. L *basis* f. Gk *basis* . . .]). Thereafter, the word may be traced back to earlier forms in other languages (preceded by 'f.') or in the same language (usually placed in round brackets). Where no form is given after the name of a language, it is understood to be the same as in the next language mentioned: at **high**, 'OS, OHG *hōh*' implies that the Old Saxon form is also *hōh*; at **Moor**<sup>2</sup>, 'ME f. OF *More*' implies that the Middle English form is also *More*. Where no meaning is given for a form, it is understood to be the same as for the last one previously given in the etymology: at **knave**, 'OE *cnafa* boy, servant, = OHG *knabo*' implies that the Old High German form also had those meanings. Where no meaning is given for the first form in an etymology, it is understood to be the same as the first listed meaning of the English word.

There are frequent cross-references to other entries which represent component parts of a word, or which share some aspect of the derivation; these are printed in SMALL CAPITALS. An asterisk (\*) precedes any form that is not recorded in known documents, but merely inferred to have existed.

Where the exact path of derivation is uncertain, the word 'or' is used: for instance, many English words have corresponding forms in both French and Latin and present a special problem in that we cannot be certain whether the word was adopted from one or the other, or from both at different times or by different persons. At **inclement**, 'f. F *inclément* or f. L *inclemens*', and at **hostility**, 'f. F *hostilité* or f. LL *hostilitas*', indicate situations of this kind.

Where the origin of a word cannot be reliably established at all, it is described as 'uncertain' or 'unknown', even if there are frequently-repeated speculative derivations (as with *posh*). In such cases the century in which the word was first used in English is stated.

'After' introduces a word or form or language that has served as a basis for analogical formation.

The source of derivatives within an entry is usually indicated by

A.