

Oxford Student's Dictionary of Current English

AS Hornby
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Second Edition
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What this dictionary can tell you about English

Spelling

gorgeous /'gɔ:dʒəs/ *adj* 1 richly coloured, magnificent, *a gorgeous sunset* 2 (informal) giving pleasure and satisfaction: *gorgeous weather, a gorgeous dress*
gorgeously *adv*

burglar /'bɜ:glə(r)/ *nc* a person who breaks into a house etc at night in order to steal
burglar alarm *nc* a device used to warn of burglars

NASA /'næsə/ *acronym* National Aeronautics and Space Administration (the US government department for space exploration)

mkt *written abbr (commerce)* market

col-our (US = col-or) /'kɒlə(r)/ *n* 1 *nc* (also

fer-tile-ize (also -ise) /'fɜ:tlaɪz/ *vt* 1 to make

mys-tery /'mɪstəri/ *n* (pl -ies) 1 *nc* something of

ba-sis /'beɪsɪs/ *nc* (pl bases /-sɪz/) 1 the basic

ad-mit /əd'mɪt/ *v* (-tt-) 1 *vt, vi* **admit (sth, to**

eat /i:t/ *v* (pt ate /et/, pp eaten /'i:tɪn/) 1 *vt* to

un-hap-py /ʌn'hæpi/ *adj* (-ier, -iest) not happy

For detailed information,
read Appendices 1 and 2.

headword

derivative

compound

For an
explanation of
these words,
read pages
F7–8.

abbreviations are given in the
main text of the dictionary
with full information

American spelling

correct alternative spelling

plural form

an irregular plural

the last letter is doubled
before you add *-ed* or *-ing*

irregular verb forms

comparative and superlative
forms

Meaning

bake /beɪk/ *v* 1 *vt, vi* (of fish, vegetables, cakes etc) to cook, be cooked, by dry heat in an oven:
bake bread/potatoes/apples

al-so /'ɔ:lsoʊ/ *adv* 1 in addition: *I love chips and I also like peas. Also, I like tomatoes. I can also hold a spider.*

how /haʊ/ *adv*

3 in what state of health (when referring to a person): *How's your mother?* (N) 'How' always refers to health. When asking about a person's character, appearance etc use *What is ... like?* as in *What's your new teacher like?*

a simple explanation

examples of how the word is
used in sentences

a full note, with examples, on
a common error when this
word is used in sentences

Grammar

hovercraft /'hɒvəkrɑ:ft/ *nc* a vehicle that

help /helɪp/ *vt* **1** to assist, join etc (something)

EEC /i: 'si:/ *abbr* (the —) the European Economic Community. ⇨ the Common Market.

consist /kən'sɪst/ *vi* (no passive) (N) Not used in the continuous tenses, e.g. 'is/was -ing'. **1** **consist**

ill /ɪl/ *adj* **1** (pred) in poor health: *He's very ill. Unwashed fruit can make you seriously ill. She's been ill with measles/worry. Does society care about mentally ill people? Compare well¹(1). be taken/fall ill to become ill. 2 (attrib) bad: *She suffers from ill health. The ill effects of the weather are obvious. He's noted for his ill manners. Com-**

con·trary /'kɒntrəri/ *adj* (pred) **contrary to** sth opposite to something: *What you have done is*

de·pend·ance /dɪ'pendəns/ *nu* **dependence** (on sb/sth) **1** the state of being supported by

edge² /edʒ/ *v* **1** *vt* **edge sth** (with sth) to

press² /pres/ *v*

press ahead (with sth) to continue (an activity) using a determined effort: *press ahead with urgent reforms.*

press down on sb to be a heavy burden: *The new taxes pressed down on everyone.*

press (sb) for sth to demand (from a person) action, a decision etc often and strongly: *press for a new enquiry. be pressed for sth* to have (almost) too little of something: *be pressed for time/money/space.*

press on (with sth) = **press ahead** (with sth).

Usage

min·ute¹ /mɪ'nju:t/ *adj* (no comp, but the *minutest* can be used for emphasis) **1** very small: *minute particles of dust. 2 giving small details; careful and exact: *the minutest details.**

cost¹ /kɒst/ *n* **1** *nc, nu* the amount of money (to be) paid for something: *the cost of repairs/of renting a flat/of learning to drive; without regard to cost* (= without considering how much money would be needed), (N) 'Cost' is used when referring to an amount to be paid (e.g. for building, repairs, paying fees etc) which involves paying people for labour, materials, rent, meals etc. 'Price' is used when referring to payment to be paid when buying individual things as in shops. 'Cost' is also used for general expenses such as running a car, living expenses etc.

parts of speech — for an explanation of *vt* and *vi* or *nc* and *nu*, read pages F14–16

'the' is always used before 'EEC'

'I am consisting. . .', 'It has been consisting. . .' etc are not possible

this meaning of 'ill' is used after a verb. . .

this meaning of 'ill' is used before a noun — for detailed information, read pages F17–18

shows that a particular preposition is used after the word

the uses of verbs with an adverb or preposition are listed at the end of the entry for the verb — for detailed information, read pages F14–15

the special use of the superlative

a simple explanation of a common difficulty with choosing between two words that have similar meanings

orate /ɔ:'reɪt/ *vi* (formal) to speak in public.

five-er /'faɪvə(r)/ *nc* (informal) a £5 note.

'data bank/base *nc* (computers) a collection of information ready for processing in a computer.

car-ni-vore /'kɑ:nɪvə(r)/ *nc* (science) an animal that eats meat. Compare herbivore, insectivore, omnivore.

pro-tag-on-ist /prə'tæɡənɪst/ *nc* (literature) the main character in a drama or novel. Compare antagonist(2).

econ-omi-cal /,i:kə'nɒmɪkl/ *adj* careful in using money, time, supplies etc: an economical system for heating water. Opp uneconomical.

grave¹ /ɡreɪv/ *adj* (—r, —et) serious; very sad and disappointing: grave news. ⇨ gravity(2).

real /ri:əl/ *adj* existing in fact; not imagined or artificial: Was it a real man you saw or a ghost? Things that happen in real life are sometimes stranger than in stories. Who is the real manager of the business? Tell me the real (= true) reason for your anger. Compare genuine, unreal.

fa-mous /'feɪməs/ *adj* known widely; having fame: a famous scientist. Compare infamous.

words that are used in particular situations are labelled

references to opposites, related words and words that are often confused

Spoken English

read-er /'ri:də(r)/ *nc* 1 a person who reads, esp

'day-long *adj, adv* (lasting) for the whole day.

'day-re'turn *nc* (also *attrib*) a ticket to travel to a place and back on the same day.

May /meɪ/ *n* (also *attrib*) the fifth month of the year, with 31 days: He came on 6 May. (N) '6 May' is spoken as 'May the sixth' or 'the sixth of May'.

special symbols show how each word is spoken, and the marks ₁ and ' show stress — for detailed information, read page F20

a note on special problems when saying a written sentence or phrase

Make the best use of your dictionary

These notes will show you how to use this dictionary. Read all of this section so that you know the ways in which this dictionary can help you.

You can use this dictionary to find a spelling or meaning of a word but you can also use it to increase your vocabulary, learn English grammar and improve your ability to form many kinds of sentences.

Find the word you need

If you have any problems with the spelling of the word, read Appendix 1 at the back of this dictionary.

Use the word in the top corner of each page (called a *running head*) to find the page that has the word you are looking for.

For example, **brand** is on page 75:

bow

74 75

bread

low bow.
bow¹ /bəʊ/ *nc* (often *pl*) the front end of a boat or ship.

bow² /bəʊ/ *v* 1 *vt* to bend the head or body forward (as a greeting etc): *They bowed low.* **bow and scrape** to behave with too much respect in order to get a person's favour. 2 *vi* to bend ('head) forward: *They bowed their heads in pr*

disgrace. 6 a piece of burning wood (in a fire).
brand¹ /brænd/ *vt* 1 to mark (cattle, goods etc) with a brand¹(3). 2 (fig) to give (a person) a bad name: *She has been branded as a thief.*

bread /bred/ *nu* 1 (also *attrib*) a kind of food made by mixing flour with water and yeast and

The running heads show the words that are included in pages 74–75 of the dictionary.

A single word

The word you are looking for is in **thick black letters**. It is put into the dictionary in one of three ways:

- A word such as *bottle*, *happy*, *run*, *through* has a complete entry in the dictionary with numbered meanings and examples. It is in **thick black letters** and is called a *headword*:

hap-py /'hæpi/ *adj* (-ier, -iest) 1 feeling or expressing pleasure, contentment, satisfaction etc: *a happy face/child. Their marriage has been a happy one.*

headword

If a word is used in two or more grammatical forms (e.g. as a *noun* and a *verb*, or as an *adj*, *adv* and *pron*), each form is given a separate entry in alphabetical order (e.g. the *noun* entry comes before the *verb* entry) and the headwords are numbered:

bottle¹ /'bɒtl/ *nc* 1 a container with a narrow neck, used for liquids: *a wine bottle; a bottle of (= filled with) wine.* 2 as much as a bottle holds: *Mary drinks two bottles of milk a day.*

bottle² /'bɒtl/ *vi* 1 to put, store, (something) in bottles: *bottle fruit.* 2 *to bottle up (fig)* to be unable or unwilling to express feelings, anger.

} numbered headwords

If a word has two or more completely different meanings, each meaning is given a separate entry and the headwords are numbered:

grate¹ /grɛt/ *nc* (a metal frame for holding coal etc in) a fireplace.
grate² /grɛt/ *n sing* a harsh noise made by scraping (esp metals): *the grate of a door on its hinges*.
grate³ /grɛt/ *v. 1 vt* to rub (esp food) into small pieces: *grate cheese*. *2 vt* *grate (on sth)* to make a harsh noise by rubbing: *The gate grates on its hinges*. *3 vt* *grate (on sb) (fig)* to have an irritating effect (on a person): *His bad manners grated on everyone*.

} numbered headwords

- A word such as *happily*, *laziness*, *rearrangement* is formed by adding *-ly*, *-ness*, *-ment* etc to a word. This changes the grammatical form (e.g. *happy* (adjective) becomes *happily* (adverb)) but the meaning is almost the same. A word of this kind is called a *derivative* and it is in **thick black letters** at the end of the entry for the main word (e.g. **happy**):

hap-py /'hæpi/ *adj*
hap-pily /'hæpi/ *adv*
hap-pi-ness *nc*

derivatives in alphabetical order

- A word such as *air letter*, *face-cloth*, *haircut* is formed by joining two words together. It can be written as two words, as one word with a hyphen or as a single word. This new word has a different meaning from the meaning of the words that form each part. A word of this kind is called a *compound* and it is in **thick black letters** at the end of the entry for the word that forms the first part:

face¹ /feɪs/ *nc*
face-ache *nc* (fig, derog) an annoying person.
face-cloth *nc* a small square towel used for washing the face and hands.
face-cream *nc* a kind of cream for cleaning and softening the face.
face-lift *nc* (a) a form of surgery to make the face look younger. (b) (fig) an improvement to the appearance (of a building etc).
face-less *adj* (fig) unknown to the public: *the faceless leaders of commerce and industry*.
face-powder *nc* cosmetic powder for the face.
face-saving *adj* ⇒ face¹(2).

compounds in alphabetical order

A group of words

The word you are looking for may be part of a group of words, e.g. *check on a person/something*, *be in good hands*, *hold one's tongue*, *the man in the street*, *first of all*, and these are in **thick black sloping letters**. There are many kinds of groups but it will help you to remember that they are usually one of three kinds:

- A group of words such as *check on a person/something*, *be in good hands*, *hold one's tongue* is a verb with a special meaning. The meaning

is not the same as the meaning for a verb (e.g. *check, be, hold*) that forms part of the group. There are two kinds of groups like these:

a verb followed by a word like *about, down, in, on, up* (e.g. *check on a person/something*). This is in **thick black sloping letters** in the entry for the verb. If there are more than two of these in an entry, they are put at the end of the entry for the verb:

check /tʃek/ v 1 vt, vi to examine (something) in order to learn whether it is correct: *check the bill; check the time.* ⇨ check on sb/sth. 2 vt to cause (an emotion, feeling etc) to stop: *He couldn't check his anger.* ⇨ unchecked. 3 vt, vi (chess) to call, make, a check(4).
check in (at sth) to arrive and register at a hotel, airport. Hence **check-in** *nc* a place at an airport etc where one checks in for a flight.
check sb/sth off to mark a person, item etc as correct, present, dealt with etc using a list: *check off their names.* ⇨ checklist.
check on sb/sth to examine, confirm, something, a person's health etc: *check on the score; check on the baby; check on a candidate.*
check out (of sth) to pay the bill, return keys etc and leave (a hotel). **check sb/sth out (informal)** = check on sb/sth. ⇨ also check-out.
check sb/sth over (informal) = check on sb/sth.
check through sth to check(1) a list or series (to find errors, identify one item, person etc).
check up (on sb/sth) = check on sb/sth. ⇨ also check-up.

in alphabetical order ('on' comes before 'out', 'over' etc)

a verb with a noun like *hand, tongue* in the group (e.g. *be in good hands, hold one's tongue*). This is in **thick black sloping letters** in the entry for the noun. It is put at the end of the meaning of the noun that is nearest to the meaning of the group (e.g. *hold one's tongue* is at the end of **tongue**, meaning 1):

tongue /tʌŋ/ n 1 *nc* the movable organ in the mouth, used in talking, tasting, licking etc: *A white layer on your tongue can be a sign that you are ill. have a rough tongue* to have a habit of being rude or bad-tempered. **on the tip of one's tongue** ⇨ tip(1). **have one's tongue in one's cheek** to say something that one does not intend to be taken seriously. **have lost one's tongue** to be too shy to speak. **have a sharp tongue** to be easily angered, critical etc. **hold one's tongue** to be silent, stop talking. **put one's tongue out (at sb)** to do this as a rude sign. 2 *nc, nu* (also *attrib*) an animal's

in alphabetical order ('have' comes before 'hold' etc)

- A group of words such as *the man in the street* has a special meaning. The meaning is not the same as the meanings for the separate words that form the group. This is in **thick black sloping letters** in the entry for the first main word, usually a noun (e.g. *man*). It is put at the end of the meaning that is nearest to the meaning of the group (e.g. *the man in the street* is at the end of **man**¹, meaning 1):

man¹ /mæn/ n (pl **men** /men/) **1** *nc* (often used in combinations) an adult male human being: a *post-man/clergyman*. *There's a man at the door. man and boy* from boyhood onwards: *He has worked for the firm, man and boy, for thirty years. the man in the street* a person regarded as representing the interests and opinions of ordinary people. *a man of the world* a person with wide experience of business and society. **2** (usually pl;

in alphabetical order ('street' comes after 'boy' and before 'world')

Because it is often very difficult to know where to find a group like this in the dictionary, there are references (using ⇨) to send you to the right place:

boy /bɔɪ/ *nc* **1** a male person up to the age of 17 or 18. ⇨ *boyish*. *jobs for the boys* (informal) appointing one's own supporters, the people one likes etc to (senior) jobs. *man and boy* ⇨ *man*¹(1). **2** a son: *He has two boys and one girl.*

Look at the entry for **man**¹.

- A group of words such as *first of all* has a special meaning. It is in **thick black sloping letters** in the entry for the first main word (e.g. *first*). It is put at the end of the meaning that is nearest to the meaning of the group (e.g. *first of all* is at the end of **first**², meaning **1**):

first² /fɜːst/ *adv* **1** before any other or others: *I saw her first. What will do you first? First, I'd like to thank my wife. Compare last²(1), **next**²(1). *first of all* (used for emphasis): *First of all we must rescue the children. first and foremost* (used for emphasis) before anything else: *First and foremost you must check that the electricity is off.* **2** for the first time: *I first met her in Paris**

in alphabetical order ('all' comes before 'foremost')

Because it is often very difficult to know where to find a group like this in the dictionary, there are references (using ⇨) to send you to the right place:

all³ /ɔːl/ *pron. nu* *first/last/second of all* ⇨ *first*²(1), *last*²(1), *second*². **2**

Look at the entry for **first**² meaning **1**.

Look inside the front cover of the dictionary. There is a chart that has the information about how to find the word you need.

Find the meaning you need

You have found the word you need but you need the right meaning or use:

Each meaning in a main entry begins with a thick black number, **1**, **2**, **3** etc (called a *definition number*). The meanings are organized so that the one used most often and in most situations comes first. The last meanings are

ones that are less used, more formal or used in special situations like science or a particular sport. Read each numbered meaning until you find the one you need.

If you are still not sure about which meaning to choose, read all the examples that follow the meanings. These will help you to understand the meanings better.

prospect /'prɒspekt/ *n.* 1 *nc, ns* (an example of) an expectation or hope: *I see no/little/not much prospect of his recovery. There are good prospects for me if I accept the job.* 2 *nc* a wide view over land or sea: *I see something that is likely. We must face the prospect of higher bus fares.* 4 *nc* a person who is likely to be successful, to buy one's goods etc: *He's a good prospect for the gold medal.*

definition number, meaning, examples

Some entries have information about when the word is used (e.g. *formal, informal; science, sport*) to help you choose the right meaning or use of a word.

Choose the word you need

You have found the word you were looking for but you are not sure that it is the word you need:

First, you must read the entry carefully because you may find information that will make you sure.

You may be given a reference to another entry for a word that is used in similar ways. For example, at **every** you are asked to compare the use of **all**:

every /'evri/ *adj* or *det*: 1 each one (of a group) ... *I've read every book she's written of her books. Every single one of my friends is wrong. Every word he said is true. I go to the gym every day. (N) 'Every' is used with a singular noun and verb. Compare: **all** (1),*

Compare the meaning and use of 'all'.

If you look at **all**¹, you will find information to help you choose between **every** and **all**:

all¹ /ɔ:l/ *adj* or *det* ... 1 (used with pl nouns) the whole number of: *All students need a good dictionary.* (N) 'All' and 'every' can have the same meaning but 'all' is used with a plural noun, as in *All towns have a post office*, and 'every' is used with a singular noun, as in *Every town has a post office*. Similarly, in the negative, 'not all' is used with a plural noun and 'not every' with a singular noun, as in *Not all towns have/Not every town has a hospital.* Compare: **each**¹, **every**

an explanation of the differences between 'all' and 'every' and how each word is used in a sentence

You may be given a reference to the entry for another word that is often confused with the word you have found. For example, at **continuous** you are asked to compare 'continual':

con-tin-u-ous /kən'tɪnjuəs/ *adj* going on without stopping: a **continuous** struggle for human rights
Compare continual.

Look at the meaning and use of 'continual'.

When you have read the meanings and examples for both words, you can decide which one to choose.

You may be given the more usual word as the explanation but only if that word is very easy:

com-mence /kə'mens/ *vt (formal)* to begin (the more usual word). (N) For a comparison of *commence*, *begin* and *start*, ⇒ the note at *begin*(1).

'Commence' means 'begin' and 'begin' is used much more often. Look at **begin** for detailed information.

Write the word you have chosen

The biggest problems when you write a word in a sentence are spelling and grammar.

Spelling

There is information in **thick black letters** about spelling the forms of a word when it is used in sentences:

dom-ino /dɒ'mɪnoʊ/ *nc (pl -es)* (also *attrib*) (a

how to spell the plural form of a noun

sink /sɪŋk/ *v (pt sank /sæŋk/ or sunk /sʌŋk/, pp sunk)* 1 *vt, vi* (to cause a person, ship etc) to go

how to spell the different forms of a verb

dear /dɪə(r)/ *adj (-er, -est)* 1 (*adv*) loved

how to spell the different forms of an adjective

rub /rʌb/ *v (-bb-)* 1 *v, vt* to move (something)

doubling the last letter of a verb or adjective

big /bɪg/ *adj (-ger, -gest)* 1 *more than ever*

For details about spelling forms of verbs, look at the section on spelling in Appendix 2 at the back of this dictionary.

For details about spelling forms of other words, look at Appendix 1 at the back of this dictionary.

Word-division

There is one special problem when you write words. Near the end of a line of writing you may find that you do not have enough room to write the next word. The best thing to do is to begin that word on the next line.

Sometimes, especially if you are typing, you may want to divide the word at the end of a line and put part of it on the next line. This is called *word-division*. The places where a word can be divided are shown in the headword using a thick black dot:

every·body ex·amine ex·cla·ma·tion

You can divide the word at a place where there is a · by putting the part before the · at the end of a line and adding a hyphen (e.g. *every-*) and then putting the part after the · at the beginning of the next line (e.g. *body*). Always divide a *compound* at the place where the two words that form it are joined:

eye-shadow love-letter ring-leader

Grammar

There is a great deal of information about grammar in this dictionary. To help you make the most use of it, there are no codes, no difficult labels and no complicated abbreviations. Here is an explanation of how grammar is described for verbs, nouns and adjectives.

Verbs

We have most difficulty with verbs. This dictionary gives detailed information that is easy to learn and use.

Look at Appendix 2 at the back of the dictionary where there is a chart that shows all the verb tenses and their passive forms. This chart will help you to identify the tenses and choose the one you need. If you are not sure about which tense to use, look at the entry for the tense (e.g. **past perfect**) in the dictionary.

Under the chart there is useful information about particular verbs and sentences.

There is also a section in Appendix 2 on spelling verb forms (e.g. **-d**, **-ed** and **-ied**) and doubling last letters (e.g. *dragged*, *beginning*). These forms are also given in **thick black letters** at the entry for the verb in the dictionary:

marry /ˈmæri/ *v* (pt,pp **-ied**)

The past forms are '**married**'.

travel /ˈtrævl/ *v* (-ll-, US -l-)

In British English the final letter is doubled in the **past** tenses and the **-ing** form.

At the end of Appendix 2, there is a complete list of verbs with irregular forms. These forms are also given at the entry for the verb in the dictionary:

sing (pt **sang** /sæŋ/, pp **sung** /sʌŋ/)

irregular forms for the **past** tense (e.g. I **sang**) and the **past participle** (e.g. I have **sung**)

When you look at the entry for a verb, you will see *vt* or *vi* or *vt, vi*.

vt means that the verb (or a particular meaning of the verb if *vt* follows a definition number) is always followed by a noun or a noun phrase (e.g. *I broke the cup*). This is called a *transitive verb*. You cannot use a verb or meaning of a verb that is marked *vt* unless you use a noun or a noun phrase after it (e.g. *I sold my bike*, not 'I sold.')

vi means that the verb (or a particular meaning of the verb if *vi* follows a definition number) cannot be used before a noun or a noun phrase (e.g. *I laughed* or *I laughed at her*, not 'I laughed her dress.'). This is called an *intransitive verb*.

vt, vi means that the verb can be used with a noun or a noun phrase (e.g. *I burned the wood*) or without a noun or a noun phrase (e.g. *It burned easily*).

Other special difficulties when using a particular verb are given at the entry in the dictionary:

seem /si:m/ *v* (N) Not used in continuous tenses, e.g. *is/was -ing*.
 appearance of being sth
 seem tired. There seems to be no possibility of

'It is seeming', 'He was seeming' etc are not possible. Use a tense that does not have *-ing* such as 'It seems all right', 'He seemed to be working'.

If the verb is used with a particular group of words, this is given in **thick black sloping letters** in the entry for the verb:

recover (from sth)
 He is slowly recovering (from his illness).

'Recover' is used on its own or with 'from something' as shown in the example. No other addition (e.g. 'in something', 'to something' etc) is possible.

rely /raɪ/ *v* (N) **rely on sb/sth** to do sth
 I rely on my dictionary for definitions.

'Rely' is always used with 'on a person' or 'on something'. 'I rely.' is not possible.

() round some words in the group shows that these words can be used with the verb or you can leave them out (e.g. *Will he recover?* and *Will he recover from his illness?* are both possible). If there are no (), you must use all the words in the group (e.g. *You can rely on me*, not 'You can rely.')

/ in a group of words shows that you have a choice. **Rely on sb/sth** means that *You can rely on me* and *You can rely on this dictionary* are both possible.

Sometimes you will find () and / used in the same group:

rescue /'resju:z/ *vi* **rescue sb/sth (from sb/sth) to save (a person, thing) (from danger, disaster, attack, being held prisoner etc): rescuing a child (from drowning); rescue a business by lending money.**

The following choices are possible:
rescue a person,
rescue something,
rescue a person from another person,
rescue a person from something,
rescue something from a person,
rescue something from something.

This use of () and / is the same in every entry (for nouns, adjectives etc as well as verbs) and every part of an entry (in explanations, examples, idioms etc).

If you remember these easy rules about the use of () and /, you can often use a verb in many ways in sentences and you will quickly increase your use of English.

Nouns

There is a section in Appendix 1 on spelling noun forms (e.g. **-s**, **-es**, and **-ies**).

All **-ies** forms and irregular plural forms are given in **thick black letters** at the entries for nouns in the dictionary:

fly¹ /flaɪ/ *nc* (*pl* **flies**) **a kind of two-winged insect** *one fly, two flies*

child /tʃaɪld/ *nc* (*pl* **children** /'tʃɪldrən/) **1 a** *one child, two children*

When you look at the entry for a noun, you will see *nc* or *nu* or *nc, nu*.

nc means that the noun (or a particular meaning of the noun if *nc* follows a definition number) can be used with *a/an/one* and in the plural. This is called a *countable noun*.

nu means that the nouns (or a particular meaning of the noun if *nu* follows a definition number) cannot be used with *a/an/one* and cannot be used in the plural. This is called an *uncountable noun*.

house¹ /haʊs/ *nc* (*pl* — **a** /'haʊzɪz/) **1 a building for people to live in: New houses are going up everywhere.**

'A house', 'the house', 'two houses' etc are possible.

infor **ma** **tion** /ɪnfər'meɪʃn/ *nu* **news, facts or knowledge given: That's a useful piece/bit of information.**

Only 'information' and 'the information' are possible.

paper¹ /'peɪpə(r)/ *a* **1 nu** (also *attrib*) **a substance in the form of sheets, used for writing, printing, drawing, wrapping, packing etc: a sheet of paper; a paper bag.** **2 nc** = newspaper: **the evening papers.** **3 (pl)** documents showing who a

Only 'paper' and 'the paper' are possible with this meaning

'A paper', 'two papers' etc are possible with this meaning.

nc, nu means that the noun (or a particular meaning of the noun if *nc, nu* follows a definition number) can be used in the singular (with or without *a/an/one*) and in the plural:

marriage /'mæridʒ/ *n* 1 *nc, nu* (an instance of) a legal union of a man and woman as husband and wife; the state of being married: *Do you believe in marriage?* (= Do you think people should marry?) *A marriage has been arranged between Jane and Tom.* 2 **a broken marriage** one that has

'*Marriage*' can be used in either way, as shown by the examples.

Some nouns are always plural:

particulars /pə'tɪkjələz/ *n pl* details: *We need*

'*Particulars*' is always used with a plural verb, e.g. *are*.

Some nouns are always singular:

manner /'mænə(r)/ *n* 1 *nc* a way in which something is done or happens: *Do it in this manner.* 2 *n* sing a person's way of behaving towards others: *I don't like his manner.* 3 *(pl)* social behaviour:

'*a manner*', '*his manner*' etc but no plural

Some nouns are used with *the* (e.g. *the police*) and this is shown by (the—) at the entry for the noun:

police /pə'li:ʃ/ *n pl* (the—) an official group of

You must use '*the police*' and not '*a police*' or '*police*'.

Other nouns are the names of unique things, e.g. the planet 'Earth', and these are marked *n*:

earth /ɜ:θ/ *n* 1 *n* (often E-) the planet on which

There is only one.

Some nouns are always used with a capital letter (e.g. *Highness*) or are often used with a capital letter (e.g. *Parliament*). These are shown at the entry in the dictionary:

highness /'haɪnəs/ *n* 1 *nu* the state or quality of being high. 2 *nc* (H-) a title used of and to a royal person: *His/Her/Your Royal Highness.*

Only '*Highness*' is possible with this meaning.

parliament /'pɑ:ləmənt/ *nc* (also P-) a

'*Parliament*' is also used.

If the noun is used with a particular group of words, this is given in **thick black sloping letters** in the entry for the noun:

lecture /'lektʃə(r)/ *nc* **lecture** (about/on sth) a talk for the purpose of teaching: **philosophy lectures.**

The following choices are possible:
a lecture,
a lecture about something,
a lecture on something

give sb a lecture
person off or state one's disapproval

All the words in the group must be used.

() round some words in a group, e.g. **get (hold of) the wrong end of the stick**, shows that these words can be used with the noun or you can leave them out (e.g. *He got the wrong end of the stick* is also possible). If there are no (), you must use all the words in a group (e.g. *I gave him a lecture*) and you cannot change any (e.g. 'I wrote him a lecture' or 'I gave the lecture' are not possible with this meaning of *lecture*).

/ in a group of words shows that you have a choice (e.g. *lecture (about/on sth)* means that *a lecture about something* and *a lecture on something* are both possible).

Sometimes you will see () and / used in the same group as shown here (and *so listen to a lecture* is also possible).

Adjectives

There is a section in Appendix 1 on spelling comparative and superlative forms (e.g. **-r, -st; -er, -est; -ier, -iest**). These forms are given in **thick black letters** in the entry for the adjective in the dictionary:

fine /faɪn/ adj (—r, —st) 1 (of weather) bright	<i>finer, finest</i>
great /grəʊt/ adj (—er, —est) 1 well above average	<i>greater, greatest</i>
happy /hæpi/ adj (—ier, —iest) 1 feeling of	<i>happier, happiest</i>

Unusual comparative and superlative forms are also shown in **thick black letters**:

good /gʊd/ adj (better /'beta(r)/, best /best/)	irregular forms
fat /fæt/ adj (—ter, —test) 1 having much	<i>fatter, fattest</i>

Some adjectives have (*no comp*) which means that they cannot be used as a comparative or superlative (i.e. *-r, -st* etc and *more . . . , most . . .* are not possible).

equal /'i:kwəl/ adj 1 (<i>no comp</i>) being the same in size, amount, number, degree, value etc	'Equal' used with this meaning has no comparative or superlative.
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In English we can use most adjectives before a noun or after a verb (e.g. 'It's a *red* ball' or 'The ball is *red*'). But when you look at an entry for an adjective, you will sometimes see (*attrib*) or (*pred*).

(*attrib*) means that the adjective (or a particular meaning of the adjective if (*attrib*) follows a definition number) can only be used before a noun (e.g. *advance in an advance warning*). This is called an *attributive* position.

Another common use of (*attrib*) is to show that a noun (e.g. *family*) is often used as an attributive (e.g. *a family discussion* = a discussion between members of a family):