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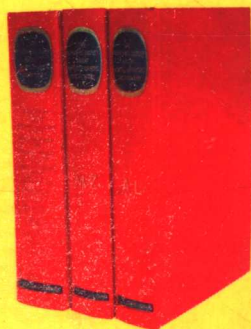
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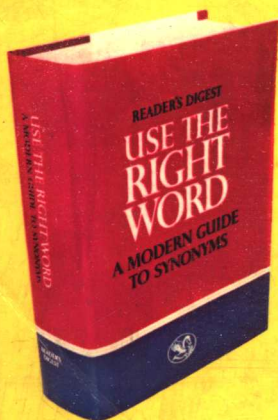
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# **How to Increase Your Word Power**

*Prepared in Association  
with Stuart B. Flexner*

The Reader's Digest Association, Inc., Pleasantville, New York

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## CONTENTS

Introduction 1

### PART ONE: THREE KEYS TO GREATER WORD POWER

1. Roots—Your First Key to Word Power 10
2. Prefixes—Your Second Key to Word Power 183
3. Suffixes—Your Third Key to Word Power 266

#### *Fun With Words:*

SHORT WORDS 17; SOME BIG A'S 27; REVIEW OF ROOTS 33; MORE KEY ROOTS 47; REVIEW OF ROOTS 53; WHICH ROOTS DO YOU KNOW? 66; COMMON ROOTS 73; REVIEW OF ROOTS 78; REVIEW OF ROOTS 90; TOUGHER ROOTS 101; STORIES BEHIND THE WORDS 108; REVIEW OF ROOTS 120; VOCABULARY BUILDING 130; REVIEW OF ROOTS 144; SPOT THE SPECIALISTS 151; STUMP YOUR FRIENDS 158; REVIEW OF ROOTS 182; FROM A TO AB 191; PREFIX AD- AND ITS DISGUISES 195; TOGETHERNESS WORDS 208; PREFIX DE- 212; PREFIX DIS- 216; PREFIX EX- AND ITS DISGUISES 219; PREFIXES MAL-, MALE-, MIS 231; ALL, AROUND, AND BESIDE 240; PREFIXES PRO- AND PRE- 246; PREFIX SUB- 254; COLORFUL ADJECTIVES 269.

#### *Quickie Quizzes:*

FOR MEN ONLY 15; FOR WOMEN ONLY 29; RECOGNIZING ROOTS 38; COLORS 56; WORD BUILDING 71; WORD BUILDING 81; WORD BUILDING 96; SOME FAMILIAR ROOTS 106; WORD BUILDING 124; WORD BUILDING 140; TEN MORE WORD BUILDING BLOCKS 167; PREFIX AB-, ABS- 187; PREFIX COM- 205; "NOT" WORDS 223; "IN" WORDS 227; BACK AGAIN 249; SUPER-WORDS 256; DOCTORS AND THEIR SPECIALTIES 261; MORE "NOT" WORDS 263; -OLOGIES 271.

#### *Exploring Words:*

THE ANIMAL KINGDOM 23; PEOPLE WHO BECAME WORDS 41; ELEVEN WORDS TAKEN FROM PLACE NAMES 61; IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE? 85; FROM THE ART WORLD 117; WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS THAT? 135; MORE PEOPLE WHO BECAME WORDS 162; HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE BIBLE? 197; HOW MANY LANGUAGES DO YOU SPEAK? 225; CHEERS, OLD CHAP 243; NUMBERING, COUNTING, AND MEASURING 265; SOME WORD MINIATURES 280.

## PART TWO: SPELL IT RIGHT

<i>Spelling—A Skill That Can Be Learned</i>	282
1. The Most Frequently Misspelled Words	284
2. Saying It and Spelling It	292
3. Which Is It: -ABLE OR -IBLE?	294
4. Which Is It: -AL, -EL, OR -LE?	299
5. Which Is It: -ANT OR -ENT? -ANCE OR -ENCE? -ANCY OR -ENCY?	300
6. Which Is It: -AR, -ER, OR -OR? OR EVEN -RE OR -OUR?	307
7. Which Is It: -ARY OR -ERY?	314
8. Which Is It: C OR CK?	318
9. Which Is It: C, S, OR SC?	319
10. Which Is It: -CEDE, -CEED, OR -SEDE?	321
11. Which Is It: -CY OR -SY?	323
12. The Final-E Rule	325
13. Which Is It: -EFY OR -IFY?	329
14. There Is No dg in Privilege	330
15. I Before E Except After C	331
16. Which Is It: -ISE, -IZE, OR -YZE?	336
17. Which Is It: -LY OR -ALLY?	338
18. Which Is It: -OUS OR -US?	338
19. When Is a Final Y Changed to I?	340

### *Fun With Words:*

-ABLE AND -IBLE 298; WORDS ENDING IN -AL, -EL, AND -LE 301; -ANT AND -ENT 305; WORDS ENDING IN -ANCE AND -ENCE 306; WORDS ENDING IN -AR, -ER, AND -OR 313; WORDS ENDING IN -ARY AND -ERY 317; REVIEW: -ARY, -ERY, -CEDE, -SEDE 322; WORDS ENDING IN -CY OR -SY 324; IE AND EI 335; WORDS ENDING IN -OUS OR -US 342; A ROUNDUP 345; A SECOND ROUNDUP 347.

### *Quickie Quizzes:*

EASY 286; MEDIUM 289; HARD 291; SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION 293; STUMP YOUR FRIENDS 297; STUMP YOUR FRIENDS 319; C, S, OR SC? 320; IE OR EI? 333; -LY OR -ALLY? 339.

### *Spelling Tests:*

FOURTEEN -ABLE, -IBLE SPELLING MISTAKES 297; -AL, -EL, OR -LE? 300; -ANT, -ANCE, -ANCY, OR -ENT, -ENCE, -ENCY 304; -AR, -ER, -OR, OR -RE 311; -ARY OR -ERY? 315; -CEDE, -CEED, OR -SEDE 321; -CY OR -SY? 323; THE FINAL-E RULE 328; -EFY OR -IFY? 330; -EGE OR -EDGE? 331; IE OR EI? 334; -YZE, -ISE, OR -IZE? 337; Y OR I? 344.

## PART THREE: SAY IT RIGHT

<i>Pronunciation—Part Of Your Word Power</i>	348
1. <b>Speak for Yourself</b>	349
2. <b>“Correct Pronunciation”</b>	356
3. <b>Don’t Leave Out Letters or Sounds</b>	359
4. <b>Don’t Add Letters or Sounds</b>	364
5. <b>Is CH Pronounced CH, SH, or K?</b>	368
6. <b>The Hard G, the Soft G, and Some Other G’s</b>	369
7. <b>-ATE, -ILE, and S</b>	373
8. <b>The Shifty Accent</b>	376
9. <b>Where Are You?</b>	381
10. <b>Don’t Let Foreign Words Confuse You</b>	384

### *Fun With Words:*

FOURTEEN PRONUNCIATION DEMONS 355; COLORFUL ADJECTIVES 358; SILENT LETTERS 367; C, CH, OR K CHALLENGES 370; THE SHIFTY ACCENT 380; FROM THE FRENCH 387.

### *Quickie Quizzes:*

DEMONS AND DOUBLE DEMONS 352; TEN KEY PUZZLERS 363; GETTING THE GIST OF G’S 372; -ILE AND S SOUNDS 375; IT’S A GREAT PLACE TO VISIT, BUT . . . 383.

## PART FOUR: PUNCTUATE IT RIGHT

<i>Punctuation Marks—Clues To Clearer Meaning</i>	392
1. <b>Capitalization</b>	394
2. <b>The Period</b>	402
3. <b>The Question Mark</b>	404
4. <b>The Exclamation Point</b>	405
5. <b>The Comma</b>	408
6. <b>The Colon</b>	412
7. <b>The Semicolon</b>	415
8. <b>The Dash</b>	419
9. <b>Quotation Marks and Italics</b>	421
10. <b>Parentheses and Brackets</b>	425
11. <b>The Apostrophe</b>	427
12. <b>The Hyphen</b>	433

### *Fun With Words:*

MORE FOREIGN WORDS 403; MORE SHORTIES 414; ONE-SYLLABLE WORDS 418; REVIEW OF PREFIX PRE- 432.

***Punctuation Tests:***

CAPITAL LETTERS 401; PERIODS, EXCLAMATION POINTS, AND QUESTION MARKS 407; COMMAS, SEMICOLONS, AND COLONS 417; THE APOSTROPHE 431; THE HYPHEN 437; A HARD FINAL EXAMINATION 438.

**PART FIVE: PRACTICAL GRAMMAR**

<i>Putting Grammar To Work</i>	442
<b>1. Wrong Pronouns</b>	443
<b>2. Singular and Plural Forms</b>	447
<b>3. Wrong Pronouns</b>	449
<b>4. Misplaced Modifiers</b>	451
<b>5. Wrong Verb Form</b>	454
<b>6. Confusion of Adjectives and Adverbs</b>	462
<b>7. The Double Negative</b>	466

***Fun With Words:***

MORE -ABLE, -IBLE WORDS 446; INTERESTING VERBS 461.

***Grammar Tests:***

I OR ME? SHE OR HER? HE OR HIM? WE OR US? THEY OR THEM? 445;  
THE NUMBERS GAME 450; JUST FOR FUN 453; CORRECT VERB FORMS  
459; WELL OR GOOD? BAD OR BADLY? SLOW OR SLOWLY? 465

**PART SIX: USING YOUR WORD POWER**

<i>Use Your Word Power Right</i>	470
<b>1. Wrong Usage</b>	472
<b>2. Pairs That Snare</b>	479
<b>3. Confused Words</b>	499
<b>4. Linked Words</b>	513
<b>5. Six Key Questions About Usage and Grammar</b>	515

***Fun With Words:***

REVIEWING THE SPECIALISTS 520.

***Quickie Quizzes:***

PAIRS THAT SNARE 484; REVIEW OF PAIRS THAT SNARE 491; MORE  
PAIRS THAT SNARE 498; CONFUSED WORDS 505; REVIEW OF CONFUSED  
WORDS 512; LINKED WORDS 514.

<i>Usage Test: AVOIDING POOR USAGE</i>	478
<b>LEXOGUIDE</b>	521
<b>INDEX</b>	711



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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is very simple: to help you master the English language quickly, easily, and thoroughly. If you are a poor speaker or writer, this book will help you become a good one. If you are a good speaker and writer, it will help you become a better one. It will help you to increase that vital asset—your word power.

Starting with the very first chapter, **HOW TO INCREASE YOUR WORD POWER** teaches you thousands of words to add to your vocabulary and gives you all the clear explanations, simple rules, and professional tips for vocabulary building, perfect spelling, correct pronunciation, proper punctuation, correct usage, and good grammar.

Actual tests have shown that a person's success in any field is closely related to his or her vocabulary and language skills. Such tests show that successful executives, students, scientists, secretaries, housewives, doctors—successful people in all walks of life—all have in common a mastery of words. That is why **HOW TO INCREASE YOUR WORD POWER** can be important to you. It can teach you to use your language far more easily, correctly, and effectively than you now do. It offers you the kind of self-training that can make you a confident, persuasive speaker and writer.

### What This Book Contains

To do all these things, this book is actually two volumes in one. The first contains six parts, which form a complete self-teaching and review book on vocabulary building and good English. The second is the *Lexoguide* section, which is your own quick A-to-Z reference guide to over 4,000 of the most troublesome but useful words in the English language.

The first six parts of the book are *Three Keys to Greater Word Power*, *Spell It Right*, *Say It Right*, *Punctuate It Right*, *Practical Grammar*, and *Using Your Word Power*. Each contains step-by-step chapters that give you important vocabulary words and all the facts and easy-to-remember rules, hints, and tips you need to know. Each teaches you vocabulary building and the do's and don't's of good English. Each is complete, authoritative, and full of information, word lists, and entertaining special features. These special features include

over 100 tests, quizzes, and word games. Scattered throughout the entire book, these features include *Fun With Words* to test your vocabulary, *Quickie Quizzes* for speedy review, *Exploring Words* to tell you the fascinating stories behind many of the words we use every day, and spelling, pronunciation, punctuation, usage, and grammar exercises to sharpen your skills. (The correct answers immediately follow all vocabulary tests, review quizzes, and exercises so that you can check yourself quickly.)

Every chapter in the first section of the book gives you concise, easy-to-remember explanations of one basic group of vocabulary words or of one basic problem in English. Most chapters contain lists of words to add to your vocabulary or of spelling, pronunciation, or usage demons for you to learn or review. And finally, of course, many chapters end with an entertaining vocabulary test, review quiz, or even a word game to stump your family and friends.

Remember that just because this section is divided into six parts does not mean that you should separate vocabulary building, spelling, pronunciation, punctuation, usage, and grammar in your own mind. The divisions are intended only to make learning easy by letting you concentrate fully on a single vocabulary list or language problem at a time. Even though each part is a unit by itself, all six have been thoroughly integrated into the overall plan of HOW TO INCREASE YOUR WORD POWER. Here's what you will find in each of them.

**THREE KEYS TO GREATER WORD POWER** This is the longest and one of the most important parts of the book, because a large, useful vocabulary is the basis of word power. It takes up the three keys to vocabulary building by teaching you to recognize the basic building blocks of words, while at the same time teaching you thousands of words using these building blocks. Every chapter in this part explains one or more basic word elements or building blocks and then lists, defines, and teaches the most useful, typical, and interesting core words based on them. Since the lists of vocabulary words taught in each chapter are grouped together and related in meaning, spelling, and pronunciation, they are easy to learn and remember. This part of the book also lists further related words to study. Many chapters are followed by vocabulary tests and drills.

**SPELL IT RIGHT** Step by step this part of the book teaches you all the facts, rules, tricks, and tips you need to spell perfectly—and it actually lists and tells you how to spell all of the most commonly mis-

spelled words. It includes spelling lists from high schools and colleges, business firms, and government agencies. Almost every chapter in this section takes up one basic spelling problem, such as double letters; *-able* or *-ible*; *-ie* or *-ei*; *-ceed*, *-cede*, or *-sede*; *-ance* or *-ence*, and tells you how to solve the problem. Helpful lists of all the most troublesome words in a specific problem category make it easier for you to learn all the related facts, rules, and tips.

**SAY IT RIGHT** This part teaches you to pronounce words properly. Almost every chapter in this part deals with one common pronunciation problem, such as avoiding slovenly speech, accenting the right syllable, long and short *a* sounds, silent letters, tricky *c* and *k* sounds, what words end in the confusing *-ate* or *-it* sounds and in the *-ile* or *-il* sounds. Each of these chapters contains lists of pronunciation demons, telling you exactly how to pronounce the words properly, and gives you rules and tips on pronouncing new words as you encounter them.

**PUNCTUATE IT RIGHT** This part of the book gives simple but complete explanations of all the punctuation marks and how, why, and where to use each—*plus* hundreds of examples for you to study or refer to at any time. Separate chapters cover the use of every punctuation mark and formality, including capital letters, the period, the comma, the semicolon, quotation marks, question marks, exclamation points, and parentheses. There are punctuation exercises and drills to give you practice and the *Fun With Words* vocabulary tests, quizzes, and word games that appear throughout the book.

**PRACTICAL GRAMMAR** This part of the book does *not* teach grammatical theory but only practical grammar, the grammar you must know and use to speak and write well. It tells what good grammar is and how to know and use it easily and quickly. It takes up only the most common mistakes and problems in grammar and tells you how to recognize and avoid them. There are complete, up-to-date discussions of such old puzzlers as *It is I* or *It is Me*, *Who* or *Whom*, split infinitives, ending sentences with prepositions, and many others. There are many examples, showing you exactly what to do and how to do it.

**USING YOUR WORD POWER** This part explains the various levels of speech and writing (formal and informal, slang, nonstandard) and when and how to use or avoid them. Most of the chapters in this section list the most commonly confused, misused, and abused words in the English language, point out the pitfalls of each, tell you how

to avoid embarrassing mistakes, and show you how to use the proper word in the proper place.

Thus, the six parts which make up the first section of *How To INCREASE YOUR WORD POWER* can increase your vocabulary by thousands of words and teach you perfect spelling, correct pronunciation, perfect punctuation, correct usage, and good grammar. They will increase your word power and help you master English.

## The Lexoguide

The second major section of this book is the *Lexoguide*, an easy-to-use A-to-Z list of over 4,000 of the most troublesome but useful words in the English language. It gives you quick answers to their correct spelling, hyphenation, pronunciation, meaning, and use—along with thousands of sample sentences showing how the words are used; tips on their spelling, pronunciation, and usage problems; and thousands of synonyms and antonyms. Thus, the *Lexoguide* is your personal language reference book, a combined short dictionary, thesaurus, and usage book of the words most likely to be looked up in home, school, or office. The *Lexoguide*, along with the many word lists and tips throughout the first six sections of this book, can serve as a permanent guide book to answer your language questions and solve your language problems at a glance.

## How This Book Was Written

*HOW TO INCREASE YOUR WORD POWER* combines the “tried-and-true” methods of teaching with the latest modern methods of vocabulary building and English instruction. All of the text, all the words taught and examples given, and all the tests, quizzes, exercises, and word games have been carefully selected to help you master a large vocabulary and the rules of good English.

In order that this book be complete, it teaches you both the most effective and the most troublesome words in the English language, as shown by thousands of actual tests and major word lists. For example, spelling word lists from grade-school tests, high-school tests, Regents and college-entrance exams, remedial-reading courses, college-board and placement exams, secretarial and business schools, large business firms, government agencies, and research bureaus have

been checked to insure that all the most important, useful spelling words, rules, and tips are given in this book. The same care has been taken with all the other sections to insure that the word lists, rules, tips, and tests given in the vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, punctuation, usage, and grammar sections include all the most important, practical, easy-to-use information, all the demon words, and all the answers to the questions and problems you may have.

## How To Use This Book

How much time you should spend on building your vocabulary and your mastery of good English depends on your present level of skill and your own need and desire to learn. Fifteen minutes a day may be enough to achieve what you want, or you may want to put in as much as an hour a day if you need to make more rapid progress. You can learn the material in **HOW TO INCREASE YOUR WORD POWER** in 30 days or you can enjoy learning from it at your leisure over a period of several months.

To get the most out of this book be sure to master the simple rules, easy tips, and problem words from each chapter before starting the next. Do all the tests, quizzes, and word games, too—they are fun and you will learn something from all of them. In other words, don't just let your eyes passively read this book—get your mind actively involved in it, chapter by chapter and quiz by quiz. Concentrate on your own language problems. If you already know and use a word properly or don't have a problem with this or that spelling, pronunciation, punctuation, usage, or grammar rule, then just review the chapter that covers it and spend more time on the words and chapters that you, as an individual, need to work on.

However much time you take to study, read, browse in, or refer to this book, remember one thing: you'll be mastering the English language—there aren't many more profitable or satisfying ways to spend your time.

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## HOW TO USE THE PRONUNCIATION KEY

One problem of teaching proper pronunciation in a book is that the reader *sees* the printed words but cannot *hear* them. All dictionaries and language books, including this one, overcome this problem in a very simple way: We “respell” the words within brackets or parentheses so that they are written exactly as they should sound. For example, if the word *cat* were a pronunciation demon that we wanted to show you how to pronounce, we would respell it [kat].

Why is such respelling necessary to show correct pronunciation? First, because the English language uses over 45 basic sounds but has only 26 letters in the alphabet to represent them. Thus, some letters must do double duty and stand for more than one sound (all vowels, *a, e, i, o,* and *u,* do double duty as does *y,* which is both a consonant and a vowel). Second, because our normal, correct spelling does not always indicate the way words are pronounced today.

Thus, the letter *c* can be represented by a *k* to show that *cat* is pronounced [kat] or it can be represented by an *s* to show that the word *city* is pronounced [sit'ē]. This is simple for all the letters except the vowels *a, e, i, o,* and *u* and the letter *g* when it is pronounced [j] in such words as *gentleman, gem, gelatin,* and *genius.* Each vowel can be pronounced in two or more ways (the letter *o* can be pronounced in at least seven different ways!). So to show you exactly how an *a, e, i,* or *u* should be pronounced in any given word, certain simple marks (called diacritical marks) may be placed over the letter. For example, if a vowel in any word should be pronounced like the *a* in *ace,* then that vowel is represented by *ā.* Thus, if the word *age* were a pronunciation demon we would respell it for you as [āj].

You never really have to memorize the letters and symbols used in such respellings. You already know exactly what *k* and *s* sound like; so that, if *cat* is respelled [kat] and *city* is respelled [sit'ē], you just pronounce them exactly as you see them. But suppose you don't know how the *ē* in the respelling [sit'ē] should be pronounced? It's simple. You turn to the PRONUNCIATION KEY (a list of all the letters, symbols, and marks used to indicate pronunciation) and find that the *e* is pronounced as the first *e* in *even* or the *ee* in *tree.* Thus, by already knowing how to pronounce the letters in a respelled word or by looking up any unusual symbols, combinations, or marks (such as an *a, e, i, o,* or *u* with diacritical marks) in the pronunciation key, you can pronounce the word

properly—because it has been respelled for you exactly as it sounds.

Are there any other letters or marks used in respelling words so that they read the same way they sound? Yes, three easy ones. A primary stress mark ( ' ) is placed after the group of letters forming a syllable that should be “stressed” or said loudest. Thus, *city* is respelled [sit'ē] and the primary stress mark shows that it is stressed or accented on the first syllable, said as SITE rather than as sitE. Some longer words will have both a primary stress mark ( ' ) over the syllable to have the greatest emphasis and a secondary stress mark ( ' ) over the syllable to have slightly less emphasis. Thus, the word *commendation* is respelled as [kom'ən-dā'shən], which shows you that the first syllable, kom, has the greatest emphasis and the third syllable, dā, has slightly less emphasis. So the primary stress mark ( ' ) and the secondary stress mark ( ' ) are two marks you should remember to help you pronounce the respelled words properly.

The third unusual mark or symbol you will see in respelled words looks like this: ə. Linguists call this ə symbol the “schwa” and it merely indicates the very common “uh” sound in English. So when you see the symbol ə in a respelled word, it is pronounced “uh.” Amazingly enough, all five of our English vowels, *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*, are often pronounced as ə or “uh.” For example:

the *a* in *above* respelled [ə·buv']  
the *e* in *sicken* respelled [sik'ən]  
the *i* in *clarity* respelled [klar'ə·tē]  
the *o* in *melon* respelled [mel'ən]  
the *u* in *focus* respelled [fō'kəs]

That's all you need to know about how words are respelled in this book when it is necessary to show you how they are actually pronounced. The respelling system is simple: it uses common letters like *k* to respell *cat* [kat] and a few special combinations and marks to respell the *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u* vowel sounds, like the *e* sound in *city* [sit'ē], or like the combined *th* sound in *this* [this]. It also uses primary ( ' ) and secondary ( ' ) stress marks and the ə symbol to represent the common “uh” sound.

On the following page is a complete pronunciation key for you to refer to whenever you see a word respelled to indicate its proper pronunciation and aren't sure what the letters, symbols, or marks stand for. (This pronunciation key is based on that used in the Reader's Digest GREAT ENCYCLOPEDIA DICTIONARY.)

## PRONUNCIATION KEY

The primary stress mark (ˈ) is placed after the syllable having the heavier stress; the secondary stress mark (ˈ) follows a syllable having a somewhat lighter stress, as in **com·men·da·tion** (komˈən·dāˈshən).

a	add, map	m	move, seem	u	up, done
ā	ace, rate	n	nice, tin	û(r)	urn, term
â(r)	care, air	ng	ring, song	yōō	use, few
ä	palm, father				
b	bat, rub	o	odd, hot	v	vain, eve
ch	check, catch	ō	open, so	w	win, away
d	dog, rod	ô	order, jaw	y	yet, yearn
e	end, pet	oi	oil, boy	z	zest, muse
ē	even, tree	ou	out, now	zh	vision, pleasure
f	fit, half	ōō	pool, food		
g	go, log	ōō	took, full	ə	the schwa, an un-
h	hope, hate	p	pit, stop		stressed vowel
i	it, give	r	run, poor		representing the
ī	ice, write	s	see, pass		“uh” sound spelled
j	joy, ledge	sh	sure, rush		<i>a</i> in <i>above</i>
k	cool, take	t	talk, sit		<i>e</i> in <i>sicken</i>
l	look, rule	th	thin, both		<i>i</i> in <i>clarity</i>
		th	this, bathe		<i>o</i> in <i>melon</i>
					<i>u</i> in <i>focus</i>

### FOREIGN SOUNDS

à	as in French <i>ami</i> , <i>patte</i> . This is a vowel midway in quality between [a] and [ä].	ñ	This symbol indicates that the preceding vowel is nasal. The nasal vowels in French are œñ [brun], ân [main], än [chambre], ôñ [dont].
œ	as in French <i>peu</i> , German <i>schön</i> . Round the lips for [ō] and pronounce [ā].	,	This symbol indicates that a preceding (l) or (r) is voiceless, as in French <i>fin-de-siècle</i> [fañ·de·syèˈklʰ] or <i>fiacre</i> [fyàˈkrʰ]; that a preceding [y] is pronounced consonantly in a separate syllable followed by a slight schwa sound, as in French <i>fille</i> [fēˈyʰ]; or that a consonant preceding a [y] is palatalized, as in Russian <i>oblast</i> [ôˈblastyʰ].
ü	as in French <i>vue</i> , German <i>grün</i> . Round the lips for [ōō] and pronounce [ā]		
kh	as in German <i>ach</i> , Scottish <i>loch</i> . Pronounce a strongly aspirated [h] with the tongue in position for [k] as in <i>cool</i> or <i>keep</i> .		



**PART ONE**

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**Three Keys  
To Greater  
Word Power**