Longman
Dictionary
of the
English
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Longman

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Foreword

Good dictionaries proceed from a controlled interaction of tradition and innovation. Too much of the one results in being locked into out-dated practice and presentation. Too much of the other results in a book where the reader misses familiar forms of guidance. The present volume has achieved a superb balance – as well it might, in view of its lineage.

For this book is a very special member of a very special family. Part of what is special about the family is that there is a distinguished genealogy, since it was of course the house of Longman that published Samuel Johnson's monumental dictionary in 1755; and the Longman list includes another historic contribution to lexicology, the *Roget's Thesaurus*.

But to come down to the present day, there have been outstanding new additions to the 'family' since the 1970s: the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* – a strikingly innovative work designed primarily for the mature learner; the *New Generation Dictionary* – an attractive small book for younger learners; the *New Universal Dictionary* – a major and very enjoyable work for everyone in the home.

And now the *Longman Dictionary of the English Language*. What is so 'very special' about this latest member of this very special family? It is special because it is the most representative of the rich storehouse of lexical information (the Longman database) from which the others have proceeded. Reversing the biological process of germination, we now have the birth of the parent book of which the earlier dictionaries are the offspring.

But the *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* is not merely larger: though this it certainly is, with nearly a quarter of a million lexical definitions, and an extraordinarily wide coverage of the English used in the major English-speaking countries and in the major fields of activity from sport to science. At least as significant as the size and coverage, however, is the firm grasp on a first-class lexicographical method that reflects the most recent scholarly work in this field: meticulous care with sense differentiation, precision of definition, detailed etymology, abundant cross-reference – the whole being computer-checked for accuracy. The discerning user who is concerned to write with discrimination is well served with comprehensive usage notes (especially on points of English where usage is disputed) and with essays explaining the nuances involved in words of similar or contrastive meaning.

Randolph Quirk
Vice-Chancellor, University of London,
Senate House, London WC1, 4 May 1984

Preface

The earliest English dictionary (excluding glossaries and bilinguals) was a small volume compiled by Robert Cawdrey, an obscure schoolmaster, with the assistance of his son Thomas, which was published in 1604 as *A Table Alphabeticall, Contayning and Teaching the True Writing and Understanding of Hard Usuall English Wordes*. In the centuries since that modest pioneering work, dictionaries have developed greatly. The goal of a modern monolingual dictionary, in very general terms, remains similar to that of Cawdrey: to collect and describe the vocabulary of a language in order to serve the users of that language in their daily need to comprehend and interpret the civilization in and through which they live. Its scale is far more comprehensive, however, for Cawdrey's work did not aim to provide a full description of the language and contained barely three thousand entries. Moreover, the evolution of scholarly and scientific method, and civilization in general, have contributed to the growth of the dictionary. Whereas many principles of lexicography have long been established, there has also been a continuing process of refining old techniques and evolving new ones. A new dictionary is thus aided by accumulated experience and the substantial advances in linguistic analysis made during the last hundred years, quite apart from the improved methods of collecting, storing, and retrieving information which are made possible by new technology.

The needs and skills of dictionary-users have also changed. Cawdrey's dictionary, written long before the time of universal education and increasing social equality, was professedly intended 'for the benefit & helpe of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or any other unskilfull persons'. A comprehensive modern dictionary contains many special features evolved in response to the manifold and increasingly sophisticated requirements of users, ranging from the student to the solver of crossword puzzles. It has to answer innumerable purposes and to function in homes, libraries, educational establishments, and places of work as a source of knowledge of many kinds. While remaining preeminently a listing of words and their meanings, it must also contain elements of more specialized reference works in order to provide a full, accurate, and up-to-date record of our language and our world.

The range of English vocabulary

Cawdrey's *A Table Alphabeticall* set a very limiting precedent for other seventeenth-century dictionaries, such as John Bullokar's *An English Expositor* (1616) and Henry Cockeram's *The English Dictionarie* (1623). Dealing exclusively with 'hard' words (mostly neologisms or nonce-terms of Latin and Greek derivation), they included such polysyllabic monsters as *obsalutrate* and *embriolate*, but not *take* or *want*. Not until the eighteenth century –

sketchily in John Kersey's *A New English Dictionary* (1702), more thoroughly in Nathan Bailey's *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1721) – did any lexicographer attempt to cover the full range of English vocabulary. Even then, the legacy of the 'hard words' tradition remained for many years more, as successive dictionaries inherited from their predecessors words which had no currency in actual usage.

In the later part of the twentieth century, however, we face the problem that the corpus of English is so vast, ever-expanding, and impossible to demarcate precisely, that it is a hopeless ambition to include it all in one dictionary. Realistically, a practical dictionary can aim to include all the language which its users might expect to encounter in speech or writing, outside highly technical contexts or untypical circumstances. It must certainly describe the common core of familiar English as well as a large number of more specialized words. Yet in one respect there may be a significant parallel between our own age and the era of the 'hard words' dictionaries. Both are, in many people's opinion, periods of rapid and bewildering changes in the English language; times of notable social, cultural, and linguistic developments, with inventions, novel ideas, and an increased accessibility of foreign lands bringing a multitude of new words and usages into English.

Reflecting and responding to this situation, the *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* pays special attention to three areas of vocabulary inadequately covered in many older dictionaries. First, there is extensive treatment of scientific and technical words: the burgeoning terminology, much of it no longer exclusive to specialists but entering our daily speech, of a radical change in our daily lives – our domestic life, our health, work, leisure – and in our conceptions of the universe. Secondly, particular consideration has been given to English as it is used throughout the world. The English written and spoken in Britain must now be classified as only one variety of a language spoken by more than 300 million people throughout the world, of which there are other major varieties in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Caribbean, and South Africa, beside minor varieties elsewhere and an infinite number of the local subvarieties commonly known as dialects. In the age of the 'global village', and with English continuing to grow in importance as a medium of international communication, a dictionary cannot afford to be insular; hence this work provides an exceptionally full treatment of significant features of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling occurring in non-British English. Thirdly, many items have been included from colloquial and idiomatic English: the common currency of our speech, yet an elusive or ambiguous area of language which can produce many misunderstandings and can be most difficult for the lexicographer to identify and describe.

Clarity in definitions

The modern dictionary is, then, far more inclusive than its ancestors; it is also a much more reliable and efficient tool of explication. Using the sophisticated defining techniques of contemporary lexicography, the compilers of the *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* have striven to ensure accuracy, clarity, and consistency of presentation. Accuracy derives from the assembling and rigorous anatomy of a mass of data, and from the advice of expert consultants; clarity from the persistent effort to make the language of definitions readily comprehensible without distorting or omitting information; and consistency from a firm framework of working principles and a thorough system of cross-checking.

More specifically, the pursuit of clarity in this dictionary has produced an innovative treatment of certain definitions. Although it has long been an axiom of lexicography that a definition should employ, in Samuel Johnson's words, 'terms less abstruse than that which is to be explained', this goal sometimes proves very difficult to accomplish. Many basic words (such as *sky, house, anger*) can scarcely be explained except by means of more elaborate words; Johnson's own treatment of *network* ('any thing reticulated or decussated, at equal distances, with interstices between the intersections') is a notorious example of this tendency. Moreover, there is the problem posed by relatively abstruse words, or words pertaining to specialized subjects, the explanation of which, in conventional dictionaries, involves the use of other words which are probably known only to someone already well-acquainted with the subject or possessing an uncommonly extensive vocabulary.

The special system employed in this dictionary has previously been restricted to a few dictionaries intended primarily for learners of English. But learning words is, even for the native speaker and regardless of educational qualifications, an inexhaustible process that continues throughout our lives; it is therefore reasonable to assume that anyone consulting a dictionary may be, for the nonce, a learner who needs guidance. Many dictionaries are not genuinely accessible. Most users are familiar with the problems of complete disorientation when faced with a definition in purely technical terms, and of frustration when having to hunt through a dictionary in order to find explanations of purported explanations. In this dictionary, however, the technique of combining a technical, specialized, or abstruse defining term with a brief nontechnical gloss should enable all readers to grasp without difficulty or distraction the essence of the definition. At the same time, individual readers can approach such definitions on different levels, depending on their existing knowledge of the field of terminology being explained. A biochemist looking up a biochemical term will find an accurate scientific definition; an architect knowing little or nothing about biochemistry will find that same term explained simply and comprehensibly and can obtain more detailed information by consulting entries for those specialized terms distinguished by being printed in a different typeface.

Words in context: grammar and usage

Although the main principle of a dictionary assumes that the basic unit of discourse is the word, it is not sufficient to offer merely explanations of individual words (the *lexis* of a language) in isolation. In actual use, words normally exist in context, in syntactical relationship with other words within a phrase or sentence. A full treatment of these relationships is strictly the domain of a *grammar*, but a dictionary should aim to offer as much detail as possible: indicating not only irregular inflections (plurals of nouns, tenses of verbs, comparison of adjectives and adverbs), but also concordance, restricted collocations, and other peculiarities of construction. On such subjects the *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* provides unusually full information, not only through a precise system of description but also through its use of thousands of illustrative quotations showing words within context.

Further, a dictionary may serve as a *usage book*, by providing reliable guidance on such topics as frequently raise dispute about 'good English'. As a continuing flow of letters to newspapers and the BBC testifies, the question of correctness in language remains very much a live issue, and a complex one often involving social and cultural attitudes. At the extreme ends of the popular debate are 'purists' maintaining that there exists an immutable standard of the language from which any change marks a decline towards barbarism, and 'permissives' holding that many traditional 'rules' are artificial barriers against the natural flow of the language and free self-expression. On a more academic level, linguists still debate the opposing principles of prescriptivism (believing that a dictionary, grammar, or similar work ought to propound authoritative rules of correctness) and descriptivism (contending that such a work should objectively describe existing usage, without seeking to fix or judge standards). The compilers of the present work believe that a contemporary dictionary can best serve its readers by being, as it were, descriptive about prescriptivism. Since attitudes towards language are part of the facts of usage, a responsible dictionary should at least discuss the controversies surrounding the use of some words and constructions. The wholly original usage notes offered in this dictionary are based not on individual prejudices but on a vast body of information about usage and attitudes. Thus they are authoritative but not authoritarian; typically they analyse the grounds of controversy, adduce valuable evidence of usage from historical and modern sources, and provide helpful advice to the speaker and writer.

'Correctness' may often be largely a matter of appropriateness to context or circumstance. Semantically, *quid* and *sidewalk* are equivalent to *pound* and *pavement*, but they would not be acceptable substitutes in certain types of discourse. Many other words are similarly restricted in use to a particular time, place, or circumstance. They may be archaic or obsolete, peculiar to a regional variety of English, used wholly or largely in specific types of communication (e g poetic, journalistic), or indicative of a certain attitude (e g derogatory, euphemistic) or 'level' of language (formal, informal, slang). Since plain definitions may fail to reveal these limitations, a dictionary must seek to identify and label all such restricted items. Indeed, such labelling appeared, albeit unsystematically, in the earliest English dictionaries, and it has generally been accepted as an essential technique of lexicography. Objections are sometimes raised that it is inevitably both arbitrary and ephemeral. While it is true that no word belongs intrinsically to a particular register of language, a consensus about its status at a given time can justifiably be noted in a dictionary which is based on plentiful evidence of prevailing usage and attitude. It is also true that, as a glance at

any older dictionary will show, the status of a word can
alter amid the general process of linguistic change. Words
labelled 'barbarous' or 'low and ludicrous' by Johnson are
now an accepted part of our language; words which only a
few years ago were used exclusively in North America
have become naturalized in British English; yesterday's
slang may become today's standard English. Yet this very
transience – together with, more obviously, the introduc-
tion to the language of new words and meanings – pro-
vides a prime justification for the production of a brand-
new dictionary, based on the latest available information.
For practical purposes an outdated dictionary is a blunt
and rusty tool – worse, even, for its deficiencies may not be
immediately apparent.

Explicit and implied meanings

Many words in our language have not only a denotation
(an explicit, direct, or exact meaning) but also a connota-
tion (an implied, suggested, or associative meaning); con-
sider, for example, the different implications of *my house*
and *my home*. Restrictive labels indicate some of these
subtler nuances, but there are two further ways in which
this dictionary reveals them. In the first place, it functions
as a *thesaurus* and *synonymy*. Frequently it provides lists
of groups of words of similar and opposite meaning
(synonyms and antonyms); in addition, it often draws
attention to commonly confused words of similar appear-
ance but different meaning. More particularly, it features
an extended treatment of several hundred groups of
synonyms (such as *secret, covert, clandestine, furtive, sur-
reptitious, stealthy*, and *underhand*), whose meanings are
precisely distinguished by analysis and illustration. This
aspect of the dictionary, partly based on work for Long-
man's recent new edition of the famous *Roget's
Thesaurus*, should prove a special attraction to all those
who value the rich subtleties of English or need to use it
with clarity and precision.

The second important treatment of connotations lies in
the use of examples illustrating a word within the context
of a phrase or sentence. By using illustrative quotations
which give typical instances of a particular use of a word,
the dictionary can readily distinguish nuances of meaning,
show the kind of context in which a word characteristically
occurs, and illustrate grammatical relationships and struc-
tures. This invaluable lexicographic technique was first
used in English in Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the
English Language* (1755); earlier English dictionaries had
merely sometimes cited sources as authorities for the
existence of a word or sense. The method has rarely been
employed so thoroughly and discriminatingly, save in
large historical dictionaries, as in the *Longman Dictionary
of the English Language*. Of the many thousand illustra-
tive examples given here, most are actual quotations from
a wide variety of named sources or have been adapted
from genuine quotations to clarify a point.

Dictionaries and encyclopedias

Inevitably, a dictionary partly overlaps an *encyclopedia*.
In contrast to most dictionaries produced in America,
France, and other countries, British dictionaries of the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries have generally
eschewed what their compilers regarded as encyclopedic

content. Theoretical distinctions suggest that the true pro-
vince of a dictionary is words, not things; or purely lexical,
not technical or factual, information; or generic, not
specific, entities. In practice, however, no clear dividing
line can be drawn between the two types of book. The
dictionary definition of any entity must involve an account
of its typical composition, attributes, and functions suffi-
ciently detailed to distinguish it from other entities; the
modern reader can scarcely be content with such vague
identifications as '*mackerel* a sea-fish' (Johnson) or '*laurel*
the tree so called' (Dyche, 1768). The compilers of the
Longman Dictionary of the English Language have
aimed, especially in dealing with terms from scientific and
technical subjects, to provide that fullness of factual infor-
mation which many readers expect to find in a comprehen-
sive dictionary. As for proper names, although they may
more justifiably be withheld from the main text of a dic-
tionary, they are nonetheless an important component of
our vocabulary and have not been neglected here; two
separate sections – a concise *biographical dictionary* and a
gazetteer – present key facts about thousands of eminent
people from all ages and many spheres of human activity,
and about the nations, chief cities, rivers, mountains, and
other physical features of our planet.

Historical information

Two contrasting methods of describing a language are
recognized by linguists: synchronic (or contemporary)
and diachronic (or historical). The former involves isolat-
ing for examination the language at one point in time,
ignoring its historical roots; the second is principally con-
cerned to chronicle the development of the language,
including all those parts of it (forms, meanings, and
words) which have become obsolete. Although a diction-
ary such as the present work is fundamentally synchronic,
emphasizing words in current use, it yet incorporates
some features of a more specialized *historical dictionary*
which are relevant to the user's practical needs. It does not
ignore that important substratum, lying beneath the active
vocabulary of the present day, of archaic or obsolete
words and senses maintaining a ghostly existence in spe-
cial contexts and old literature; it includes those elements
of the language of Shakespeare, the Authorized Version
of the Bible, and other sources which are still encountered
in our times. Nor does this dictionary sever the living
language from its deepest sources; in concise yet detailed
etymologies, it uncovers the varied origins of the English
vocabulary – presenting to the scholar a valuable mine of
information, and to the general reader a store of interest-
ing and often unexpected material that reveals a great deal
about the social and cultural history of the English-speak-
ing peoples.

Pronunciations

A general dictionary also subsumes a *pronouncing dic-
tionary*, recording the exact pronunciation(s) of words.
This is a surprisingly late development in English lexico-
graphy. Even the major eighteenth-century dictionaries
of Nathan Bailey (1727) and Samuel Johnson (1755) had
usually merely marked the main stresses of words. No sig-
nificant systematic attempt to indicate the actual sounds
of words was made before Thomas Sheridan's *General*

Dictionary of the English Language, published in 1780. Since then, many systems of transcribing pronunciations have been tried, yet few have achieved ready comprehensibility while avoiding ambiguity or inaccuracy. The International Phonetic Alphabet has been commonly used by professional phoneticians in recent years, but its special symbols undoubtedly constitute a stumbling block and source of confusion to many readers. To overcome these problems, a new method of transcription has been devised for Longman dictionaries. Dispensing with nearly all unfamiliar characters, it provides a precise, consistent, and accessible record (with wide coverage of variations and special treatment of pronunciations sometimes considered incorrect) of English as it is spoken.

Creating the dictionary

The creation of a general-purpose modern English dictionary is a massive task, and one that could never be accomplished by a person, or group of people, sitting isolated in a room, starting with the letter *a* and writing down all the words that come to mind. Since it is primarily a record or inventory of the English language as it is really used in writing and speech, the dictionary must arise from a solid foundation of reliable evidence about the language. The compilers of the *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* have indeed been fortunate to have access to the immense fund of linguistic data assembled by Merriam-Webster Inc., the publishers since the 1840s of successive editions of the internationally famous Webster's Dictionary. Their file of over thirteen million citations from all kinds of material, and from all parts of the globe where English is used, has been of indispensable service to this work; so, too, have been the justly

renowned scholarship and lexicographic expertise of their staff. Another invaluable source has been the massive corpus of spoken and written material collected by the Survey of English Usage at University College London. Much additional evidence of language use has been collected by Longman's dictionary department; and it is on the resulting vast and constantly updated collection of specimens of English that this dictionary is securely based.

The *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* is a fruit of a carefully planned project which has extended over almost ten years and, in a sense, has roots much deeper in the history of dictionaries. In the eighteenth century, Thomas Longman was one of the five collaborating publishers of Samuel Johnson's great *Dictionary* (according to Boswell, Johnson described them as 'generous liberal-minded men'); his heirs published such celebrated reference works as Peter Mark Roget's *Thesaurus* and Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopedia*. Within the last decade, Longman's Dictionary and Reference Book Department has produced the much-acclaimed *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (principally intended for foreign learners of English), the *New Generation Dictionary* (meeting the special needs of the 11-16 age group), the concise *Longman New Universal Dictionary*, and a number of more specialized reference books. The present work has brought together a variety of resources: the experience and dedication of a team of full-time staff; the expert knowledge of more than eighty consultants on special subjects; the counsel of a panel of eminent academic linguists and of an advisory body of public figures having a lively practical concern with language; and the facilities offered by an advanced data-processing system. All these have combined to collect, sift, analyse, and interpret a vast mass of information about our incomparably rich language.

Explanatory chart

Numbers in brackets refer to paragraphs in the guide to the dictionary (p xvii).

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

aah, ah /ah *often prolonged/ vi* to exclaim in amazement, joy, or
surprise <ooking and ~ing . . . >

abase /ə'bays/ *vt* . . .
antonym extol

antonym (8.6)

capitalization (5)

academy /ə'kadəmi/ *n* 1 cap a *the* school for advanced
education founded by Plato b the philosophical doctrines
associated with Plato's Academy

usage note indicating
phrase (collocation) in which
a verb frequently appears
(8.7)

acquiesce /ˌakwee'es/ *vi* to submit or comply tacitly or passively
– often + *in*

grammatical information
about an entry (4.1)

Acts /akts/, Acts of the Apostles n *taking sing vb* the fifth
book of the New Testament narrating the beginnings of the
Christian Church

adrift /ə'drift/ *adv or adj* 1 afloat without motive power or moor-
ing and at the mercy of winds and currents 2 in or into a state of
being unstuck or unfastened; loose – esp in *come   adrift*

usage note indicating the
phrase (collocation) in which
an entry is frequently found
(8.7)

arrow indicating the part of
speech formed by the
combining form subject to
a word or word part (9)

-agogue /-əgog/ *comb form* (→n) 1 leader; guide
<*pedagogue*> – sometimes derog <*demagogue*> 2 substance
that promotes the secretion or expulsion of <*emmenagogue*>

agranulocyte /ay'granyoolə,siet/ *n* any of various WHITE BLOOD
CELLS that have no conspicuous granules in the CYTOPLASM
(jellylike material surrounding the nucleus)
– compare GRANULOCYTE

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

cross-reference
recommending the user to
look up the main form of an
affix or combining form (9)

al- –see AD-

alternative society *n* the group of people who reject con-
ventional social institutions, practices, and values in favour
of a life-style based esp on communal ownership and self-
sufficiency – compare COUNTERCULTURE

italicized definite article
indicating that an entry is
always preceded by *the* (8.7)

²amount . . .
usage Amount and quantity are correctly used of mass
nouns with no plural, and of abstractions that cannot be
counted, in the way that number is used of plurals. Com-
pare <*a large quantity of butter*> <*a certain amount of
influence*> <*a large number (not amount) of people*> <*a
certain number (not amount) of mistakes*>.

essay discussing a problem
of correctness (8.6)

amorous /'amərəs/ *adj* . . .
synonyms Amatory describes behaviour or art express-
ing or inspired by sexual love, while amorous relates
specifically to sexual desire <*amatory poetry*>
<*amorous advances*>.

essay comparing two or
more words of similar
meaning (8.6)

anabatic /ˌanə'batik/ *adj* moving upwards, esp up a slope; rising
<*an ~ wind*> Gk *anabatos,* verbal of *anabainein*

etymology showing history
of an entry (12)

antebellum /ˌanti'beləm/ *adj* existing before the war; *esp* exist-
ing before the US Civil War <*an ~ brick mansion*>

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

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

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

author /'awthə/, [*fem* **authoress**] /'awthəris. awthə'res, '---/ *n*
1a the writer of a literary work ... ——— feminine form of an entry (2)

homograph number (1.1) ——— [¹] **ban** /ban/ *vt* -nn- to prohibit, esp by legal means or social
pressure

bandwagon /'band,wagən/ *n* 1 a party, movement, cause, or
enterprise that ... [– **climb/jump on the bandwagon** to attach ——— **idiom (1.3)**
oneself to a successful or popular cause, enterprise, etc, esp in
the hope of personal gain]

¹**bare** /beə/ *adj* ... [– see also **with one's bare** HANDS, **under** ——— cross-reference to an idiom,
bare POLES] specifying the entry at which
inflection (4) ——————————————————————————————— it appears (1.3)

²**barrel** *vb* [-ll- (*NAm* -l-, -ll-)] to put or pack in a barrel

blew /blooh/ [*past of* BLOW] ——————————————— inflectional cross-reference
irregular plural (4.1) ——————— giving an inflected form of
boletus /bə'leetəs, boh -/ *n, pl* **boletuses**, [**boleti** /-ti/] any of a an entry (9)
genus (*Boletus*) of fleshy fungi (class Basidiomycetes), some of
which are edible

¹**bolshie, bolshy** /'bolshi/ *n*, [*informal*] a Bolshevik ——— usage note indicating the
style, attitude, or level of
formality of an entry (8.4)

main entry (1.1) ——————— ['bolt·hole] *n* 1 a hole into which an animal runs for safety 2 a
place of refuge

object of a verb (6.3) —————————
³**bond** *vt* 1 to overlap [(e g bricks)] for solidity of construction
2 to put [(goods)] in bond until duties and taxes are paid

part of speech (3) ———————————
bonfire /'bonfie-ə/ [*n*] a large fire built in the open air

two parts of speech shown
in combination (3) ——— ¹**bop** /bop/ [*vt or n*] -pp- *informal* (to strike with) a blow (e g of
the fist)

———————————————————————————————— regional label, in this case
bottom drawer *n*. [*Br*] (a place for storing) a woman's collec- indicating that the entry is
tion of clothes and esp household articles and furnishings (e g used only in British English
linen and tableware) kept in anticipation of her marriage (8.3)

²**buoy** *vt* 1 to mark (as if) with a buoy 2a to keep afloat b to
support, sustain <*an economy* ~*ed up by the dramatic postwar*
growth of industry> 3 to raise the spirits of <*hope* ~*s him* ——— usage note applying to more
up> [□ (2&3) usu + *up*] than one sense (8.1)

cacophony /kə'kofəni/ *n* harsh or discordant sound; dissonance
... [– **cacophonous** *adj*] ——————————————————————— undefined run-on entry (1.2)

sense number (6.1) ——————————————————————————————— sense letter (6.1)
cadet /kə'det/ *n* [1] a a younger brother or son [b] (a mem-
ber of) a younger branch of a family

——————————————————————————————————— sense divider (6.1)
caff /kaf/ *n, Br informal* a café; [*esp*] a cheap plain one

usual/only subject of a verb ———————
¹**call** /kawl/ *vi* 1 ... c [*of an animal*] to utter a characteristic note
or cry ...

phrasal verbs listed ¹**cry** /krie/ *vi* 1 to call loudly ...
separately after the entry for ——[**cry down**] *vt* to disparage ...
their main verb (1.4)

¹**daring** /'deəring/ *adj* adventurously bold in action or thought
[<~ *acrobats*> <~ *crimes*>] ——————————————————— swung dash replacing entry
in an example (7)

synonymous cross-reference **dateline** /'dayt,lien/ *n* 1 a line in a written document or publica-
to a compound entry (9) tion giving the date and place of composition or issue 2
——[INTERNATIONAL DATE LINE] – **dateline** *vt*

daystar /'day,stah/ *n* 1 MORNING STAR 2 [SUN 1a] ——————— synonymous cross-reference
to a particular sense (9)

temporal label showing that **deer** /diə/ *n, pl* **deer** *also* **deers** 1 any of several RUMINANTS ... 2 verb entry ending in **-ize**
the use of a word or ——[*archaic*] an animal; *esp* a small mammal separated by a comma from
meaning is limited to special **-ise**, indicating that the two
contexts (8.2) [**depersonal·ize, -ise**] /,dee'puhsənl·iez/ *vt* 1 to deprive of forms are equal variants (2)
the sense of personal identity ...

two entries separated by a comma indicating that they are equal variants (2)

dermat- /ˈduhmət-/, **dermato-** *comb form* skin <dermat*itis*> <dermatology>

regional variant, in this case indicating that the second form is used chiefly in the USA and Canada (2)

diaeresis, *chiefly NAm* **dieresis** /die'erəsis, -'irəsis/ *n, pl* diaereses /-əseez/ 1 a mark placed over a vowel to indicate that it is pronounced as a separate syllable

two entries separated by *also* indicating that the latter is a secondary variant (2)

¹diagnostic /ˌdie·əg'nostik/ *also* **diagnostical** /-kl/ *adj* of or involving diagnosis

²diffuse ...
⚠ defuse

warning sign, in this case indicating that the entry should not be confused with an apparently similar word (8.6)

specialized word, often followed by a sense number, in small capital letters in round brackets (6.3)

DNA *n* a chemical compound ... that ... consists of long strands of phosphate groups alternating with sugar (DEOXYRIBOSE) groups ... The DNA chains typically occur as pairs in a DOUBLE HELIX (spiral of two parallel strands round the same central axis).

explanation in round brackets of specialized word in small capital letters (6.3)

-fy /-fie/, **-ify** *suffix* (→*vb*) ...

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

Explanatory chart – pronunciations

controversy /'kontrə,vuhsi, kən'trovəsi (USE *the last pron is disliked by some speakers*) *n* ...

two pronunciations followed by note indicating usage (11.5)

controvert /'kontrə,vuht, ,--'-/

another stress pattern that can be used without otherwise changing the pronunciation (11.3)

oblique lines enclosing a pronunciation (11.2)

hiss /his/ *vi* ...

¹hire /hie·ə/ *n* ...

pronunciation containing a centred dot (11.4)

Deutsche Mark /'doych,mahk (*Ger* dɔɪtʃə mark)/ *n* ...

entente /on'tont (*Fr* ātā:t)/ *n* ...

foreign pronunciations (11.9)

honorary /'on(ə)rəri/ *adj* ...

pronunciation containing (ə) (11.4)

specialist pronunciation, in this case indicating that the word is pronounced differently by sailors (11.5)

¹leeward /'leewood; *naut* 'looh·əd/ *adj or adv* ...

stress mark showing primary stress (11.3)

hoodwink /'hood,wingk/ *vt* ...

stress mark showing secondary stress (11.3)

hoof,beat /-,beet/ ...

stress pattern shown in compound words and phrases (11.3)

swung dash indicating that the plural is pronounced in the same way as the singular (11.4)

hors d'oeuvre /,aw'duhv (*Fr* ɔːr dœvr)/ *n, pl* hors d'oeuvres *also* hors d'oeuvre /aw'duhv(z) (*Fr* ~)/ ...

two pronunciations separated by *often*, indicating that they are variants but that the second is considered incorrect by many speakers (11.5)

gypsophila /jip'sofilə; *often* ,jipsə'fili·ə/ *n* ...

two pronunciations separated by *also*; indicating that they are variants but that the second is less common, or is considered less correct by some speakers (11.5)

lieutenant /lef'tenənt; *Royal Navy* lə'tenənt; *NAm* looh'tenənt/

pronunciation showing specialist and regional variant (11.5)

longitude /'lonjityoohd; *also* 'long-gi,tyoohd/ *n* ...

usage The pronunciation /'lonjityoohd/ is recommended for BBC broadcasters.

advice as to the 'safer' choice where there is some dispute over a pronunciation (11.5)

How to use this dictionary

1 How to find the word you want

Most of the words defined in this dictionary, both single words and compounds, are entered as main entries in alphabetical order. Words that are not defined, because their meaning can easily be guessed from their base form plus an added word-part, are entered either under their base form for words with suffixes or in a separate alphabetical list for words with prefixes (see 1.2). Idiomatic phrases are entered under the main word in the phrase (see 1.3). Phrasal verbs are entered under their base verb (see 1.4).

1.1 Main entries

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

²give n
giveaway ... n
given ... adj
given name n

2 A main entry with a number in it comes before a main entry with a letter in the same position:

mi-
MI5
MI6
Miami

But main entries that *begin* with a number are listed as if the number were spelt out as a word:

,two-'fisted
2,4,5-T
,two-'handed

3 Main entries beginning with Mc- are listed as if they were spelt **Mac-**.

4 Main entries beginning with St are shown with the abbreviation spelt out in full:

Saint Vitus's dance

5 Many words that share the same spelling have a different pronunciation or a different history, or are different in grammar. Such words are shown separately in this dictionary, with superior figures in front to distinguish them:

¹head n
²head adj
³head vt

These words are generally listed in historical order, according to when they first appeared in English.

1.2 Undefined words

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

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

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

miaow n 1 the characteristic cry of a cat ... – **miaow** vi

This means that the verb **miaow** is obviously related to the noun **miaow** – 'to make the characteristic cry of a cat'.

Words whose meaning can be guessed because they consist of a base form plus **anti-, non-, over-, re-, self-,** or **un-** are entered alphabetically, without definitions, in separate lists.

1.3 Idiomatic phrases

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

¹spade n ... – **call a spade a spade** 1 to call a thing by its right name however coarse ...

They are entered at the first noun they contain; hence **on the ball** appears at **ball**, **in spite of** is shown at **spite**, and **apple of somebody's eye** is entered at **apple**. If they contain no noun, they are entered at their first adjective; hence **contrary to** is shown at **²contrary**. If they contain no adjective, they are entered under their first adverb; if they contain no adverb, they are entered under their first verb; and if they contain no verb, they are entered under their first word.

When an idiom has more than one accepted form, it is entered at the first invariable meaningful word it contains, regardless of the above hierarchy. The alternative form is shown after an oblique (/):

breathe ... vi ... – **breathe easily/freely** ...

1.4 Phrasal verbs

Compound verbs consisting of a base verb followed by an adverb, a preposition, or both, are entered in a separate alphabetical list at the end of the entry for their main verb. Hence **pick at, pick off, pick on, pick out, pick over,** and **pick up** can all be found at the end of the entry for the verb **pick.**

1.5 Abbreviations

However, some abbreviations that are used like ordinary words. such as the noun IOU and the verb KO, are entered at their alphabetical places in the main body of the text. You should check in both places when in doubt.

2 Alternative versions of words

Many words come in pairs, or even trios, that are nearly identical. They may differ only in spelling (e g **judgment**, **judgement**), or in their ending (e g **polyphonic, polyphonous**), or even in the presence or absence of a complete word in a compound (e g **silk screen, silk-screen printing**) In this dictionary, common variant forms of a word are shown immediately after the main entry.

1 When the variant is preceded by a comma, it is about as common as the main entry in current standard usage

judgment, judgement *n*

When the variant is preceded by *also*, it is rather less common:

poky *also* **pokey** *adj*

These alternative forms are shown separately as main entries only if they fall more than ten places away from their main form in the alphabetical list.

2 Variant spellings of the **-ize/-ise** type are shown in abbreviated form. The variant **-ize** is taken as the main entry:

computer·ize, -ise . . . *vt*
liquid·izer, -iser . . . *n*

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

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

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

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

¹top *n* . . . **8 top, top gear** *Br* the transmission gear of a motor vehicle giving the highest ratio of propeller-shaft to engine-shaft speed . . .

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

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

This means that the spelling **jail** is used everywhere in the English-speaking world, but British English also uses **gaol** (see 8.3).

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

7 There are also, of course, many instances of pairs of words that mean the same but are not otherwise closely related to each other. In such cases, we give the definition at the entry for the commoner alternative, and refer to the less common one with the note '- called also . . .':

gudgeon pin *n* a metal pin linking the piston and CONNECTING ROD . . . - called also PISTON PIN

3 Parts of speech

Sometimes two or more parts of speech are combined:

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

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

adj	adjective:	**energetic, durable**
adv	adverb:	**very, happily**
comb form	combining form:	**Anglo-, psych-**
conj	conjunction:	**but, insofar as**
interj	interjection:	**hey, bravo**
n	noun:	**dynamite, bird of paradise**
prefix		**pre-, trans-**
prep	preposition:	**for, to**
pron	pronoun:	**herself, ours**
suffix		**-ful, -ness**
trademark		**Hoover, Valium**
vb	verb (both transitive and intransitive):	**agglomerate, americanize**
vb impersonal	impersonal verb:	**methinks**
verbal auxiliary		**can, must**
vi	intransitive verb:	**arise, arrive**
vt	transitive verb:	**indicate, thank**

4 Inflections

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

¹mouse . . . *n, pl* **mice**
¹swat . . . *vt* **-tt-**
²picnic . . . *vi* **-ck-**

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

4.1 Nouns

Regular plurals of nouns (e g **cats, matches, spies**) are not shown. All other plurals (e g **louse, lice; sheep, sheep; graffito, graffiti**) are given.

1 Sometimes alternative plurals are possible:

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

2 A plural may have an alternative pronunciation:

¹bath bahth/ *n, pl* **baths** /bahths; *sense 3 also* bahdhz/

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

coleus . . . *n, pl* **coleuses** . . .

4 Nouns that are always plural are shown as follows:

environs . . . *n pl* . . .

5 Sometimes an individual sense of a noun is exclusively plural:

¹victual . . . *n* . . . **2** *pl* supplies of food . . .

6 Some plural nouns do not always take a plural verb. This is shown as follows:

genetics *n taking sing vb* . . .
forty winks *n taking sing or pl vb* . . .

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

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

¹police *n* . . . **2a** . . . **b** *taking pl vb* policemen
silent majority *n taking sing or pl vb* . . .

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

4.2 Verbs

Regular verb forms (e g **halted, cadged, carrying**) are not shown. All other verb inflections (e g **rang, rung**) are shown.

1 A verb is counted as irregular if it ends in a vowel other than -*e*:

²visa *vt* **visas; visaing; visaed**

or if it keeps its final -*e* before the inflection:

singe . . . *vt* **singeing; singed**

2 There may be alternative inflections:

²spell *vb* **spelt** . . . *NAm chiefly* **spelled**

Inflections are shown in the following order:

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

3 For any given verb, only the irregular inflections are shown. Certain forms (e g the entire past tense, or the past tense and the past participle) are combined if they are identical. Thus in

¹run . . . *vb* **-nn-; ran; run**

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

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

²dove /dohv/ *NAm past of* DIVE
hath . . . *archaic pres 3 sing of* HAVE

4.3 Adjectives and adverbs

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

¹good . . . *adj* **better** . . . **best** . . .

Inflections that involve a change of pronunciation are shown:

¹young /yung/ *adj* **younger** /'yung·gə/; **youngest** /'yung·gist/

so are alternative inflections:

¹shy . . . *adj* **shier, shyer; shiest, shyest** . . .

4.4 Pronouns

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

²her *pron, objective case of* SHE

5 Capitalization

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

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

6 How the meanings of words are shown

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

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

Trademarks are treated in the same way:

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

Most words, however, are given ordinary dictionary definitions, with one or more meanings.

6.1 The numbering of meanings

1 The main meanings of a word are numbered:

tress . . . *n* **1** a plait of hair . . . **2** *usu pl* a long lock of hair . . .

2 When a numbered main meaning of a word is divided into subsenses, they are introduced by letters:

¹title . . . *n* **1** . . . **2a** something that justifies or substantiates a claim **b** an alleged or recognized right . . .

3 Divisions of a subsense are indicated by bracketed numbers:

¹take . . . *vb* . . . **1a** . . . **c(1)** to move against (e g an opponent's piece in chess) and remove from play . . . **(2)** to win in a card game . . .

4 When a definition is followed by a colon and two or more subsenses, this indicates that the meaning of the subsenses is covered by the introductory definition. The colon may be followed by e g when the subsenses are a representative sample rather than a complete list of meanings:

activate *vt* **1** to make (more) active or reactive, esp in chemical or physical properties: e g **a** to make (a substance) radioactive **b** to treat (e g carbon) . . .

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

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

6.2 The order in which senses are shown

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

6.3 Brackets

Round brackets are used in six main ways in definitions in this dictionary. They:

a) enclose the object of a verb:

²contract . . . *vt* . . . **2a** to catch (a disease) . . .

b) give extra information:

³nap *n* a hairy or downy surface (e g on a woven fabric)

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

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

d) enclose optional wording:

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

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

e) enclose scientific Latin names for plants and animals:

timothy . . . *n* a European grass (*Phleum pratense*) that has long cylindrical spikes . . .

f) give brief explanations of words in small capital letters:

²dominant *n* . . . **2** the fifth note of a DIATONIC scale (ordinary 8-note musical scale) represented in sol-fa by *soh* . . .

The small capital letters mark specialized words which the reader can look up for more detailed information.