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DICTIONARY**

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# **COLLINS DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**SECOND EDITION**

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## Foreword

When *Collins English Dictionary* was published in 1979, it rapidly established itself as a standard work. Since then its reputation and authority have steadily grown among an ever-widening circle of users all over the world. Those who have commented appreciatively on its quality range from leading figures in the academic world, translators, and specialists of all kinds to students, family users, and a growing band of crossword enthusiasts.

The reasons for this success are easily identified. Here, for the first time in over 45 years, was a dictionary based on a fresh survey of the contemporary language as it was actually being used in both its written and its spoken forms — a survey that not only involved some 200 specialist consultants and in-house editors, but one that set out to reflect contemporary English as the international language it had become.

Parallel to this concern with the contemporary language went a comprehensive treatment of modern science and technology, the most thorough and encyclopedic of any general single-volume dictionary to date. This encyclopedic approach was extended by a generous provision of biographical and geographical entries that provided information on people and places of cultural importance on an international scale. This proved to be a feature that won particular approbation from users of the Dictionary.

For the first time in a major dictionary of this kind, computer technology was used from the inception of the work. This made it possible to survey every field of human activity subject by subject, defining technical as well as everyday vocabulary in an exceptionally short time. Specialist consultants and general defining editors, pronunciation editors, etymologists, and other contributors were all enabled to work in parallel and then their contributions were sorted into their proper places by computer. This ensured consistency of treatment and balance of coverage and enabled the editors to produce a book that was completely up-to-date.

In addition, this vast amount of information was presented with skill and clarity. The full, descriptive definitions, the absence of dictionary jargon and typographical codes, the orderly layout of entries, and the legibility of the type contributed significantly to the success of *Collins English Dictionary*.

This new, revised edition of *Collins English Dictionary* appears at a time when the language is changing faster than at any time in the last 300 years. The ever-expanding role of English as the *lingua franca*, not only of science, technology, commerce, and diplomacy, but of culture as well, is adding to the

main river of English refreshing streams from a variety of linguistic cultures. And the rise to predominance of spoken English, mainly as the result of the world-wide penetration of radio, television, and the cinema, means that the natural cadences and structures of speech exert increasing pressure on the pronunciation of words and the sentence structures of written English.

The preparation of this new edition to take account of this rate of language change has meant the scrutiny and assessment of the many thousands of citations for new words, meanings, and idioms accumulated by our in-house reading programme since the publication of the first edition; and it has meant the systematic reassessment and updating of the biographical and geographical entries to reflect the changes in the people and places in the public eye.

It has also meant specialist consultants surveying afresh a number of rapidly developing fields like electronics, computers, aerospace, industrial relations, information technology, life sciences, physics, social welfare, and so on; and the incorporation of the many new items arising from this source.

The result is a new *Collins English Dictionary*, updated and some 10% longer than the edition it replaces. Over 7,000 new headwords have been added and thousands of new meanings. The entry count has gone up to 171,000 and the biographical entries now number some 15,000.

We are confident that this new edition will enhance the already high esteem in which the book is held by many thousands of appreciative users and will win many friends for *Collins English Dictionary*.

It would be wrong to close this Prefatory Note without thanking the hundreds of users of the Dictionary who were interested enough to write to us with their suggestions for improvements or additions. Their letters have yielded much interesting and valuable material: we are indebted to all of them, but in particular to some who have written regularly over the years, among whom may be mentioned Lindley Abbott, Bernard Kramrisch, H. S. Perrin, and Peter Pledger. Nor must we omit to record our gratitude to the many firms, organizations, and government bodies who have patiently and helpfully answered innumerable queries.

WILLIAM T. MCLEOD  
Glasgow  
May 1986



# Guide to the Use of the Dictionary

## 1 The Headword

### 1.1 Order of entries

All main entries, including abbreviations, prefixes, and suffixes, are printed in large boldface type and are listed in strict alphabetical order. This applies even if the headword consists of more than one word. Thus **bear**<sup>1</sup> and the related entries, **bearable** and **bear down**, are separated by intervening entries occurring in strict alphabetical order:

**bear**<sup>1</sup>  
**bear**<sup>2</sup>  
**Bear**  
**bearable**  
**bear-baiting**  
**bearberry**  
**bearcats**  
**beard**  
**bearded collie**  
**bearded lizard**  
**bearded tit**  
**bearded vulture**  
**beardless**  
**bear down**

**1.2** Words that have the same spelling but are derived from different sources etymologically (homographs) are entered separately with superscript numbers after the headwords.

**saw**<sup>1</sup> (sɔ:) *n.* **1.** any of various hand tools . . .  
**saw**<sup>2</sup> (sɔ:) *vb.* the past tense of **see**<sup>1</sup>.  
**saw**<sup>3</sup> (sɔ:) *n.* a wise saying, maxim, or proverb . . .

**1.3** A word with a capital initial letter, if entered separately, follows the lower-case form. For example, **Arras** follows **arras**.

**1.4** Names beginning with **Mc-** are listed in alphabetical order as if they were spelt **Mac-**. Saints are entered under their Christian names, but places named after saints are all listed alphabetically under **Saint**.

### 1.5 Plural headwords

Words that are always or usually used in the plural are entered in the plural form.

**trousers** ('traʊzəz) *pl. n.* **1.** a garment shaped to cover the body from the waist . . .

Words that have a standard use or uses in the plural may be entered as separate headwords at both singular and plural forms, with a cross-reference to the plural form at the singular entry if other headwords intervene.

**affair** . . . **1.** a thing to be done or attended to . . .  
~See also **affairs** . . .  
**affairs** . . . *pl. n.* **1.** personal or business interests . . .

### 1.6 Variant spellings

Common acceptable variant spellings of English words are given as alternative forms of the headword.

**capitalize** or **capitalise** ('kæpɪtəlaɪz) *vb.* . . .

## 2 The Pronunciation

**2.1** Pronunciations of words in this dictionary represent those that are common in educated British English speech; local pronunciation is shown for regional terms that are largely confined to the region in question. They are transcribed in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). A *Key to the Pronunciation Symbols* is printed at the end of this Guide and on the front endpapers. See also the article on *The Pronunciation of British English* by Professor Gimson on p. xvi. The pronunciation is normally given in parentheses immediately after the headword.

**abase** (ə'beɪs) *vb. (tr.)* **1.** to humble . . .

The stress pattern is marked by the symbols ' for primary stress and ˌ for secondary stress. The stress mark precedes the syllable to which it applies.

### 2.2 Variant pronunciations

When a headword has an acceptable variant pronunciation or stress pattern, the variant is given by repeating only the syllable or syllables that change.

**economic** (i:kə'nɒmɪk, ɛkə-) *adj.* **1.** of or relating to . . .

A variant regional pronunciation is preceded by an italic label.

**nomenclature** (nəʊ'menklətʃə; U.S. nəʊ'mən'kleɪtʃər) *n.* the terminology . . .

### 2.3 Pronunciation of inflections

When an inflected form has a widely different pronunciation from that of the headword, the relevant parts are shown after the inflection.

**index** ('ɪndeks) *n., pl. -dexes or -dices* (-dɪ'si:z). **1.** an alphabetical list . . .

### 2.4 Pronunciations with different parts of speech

When two or more parts of speech of a word have different pronunciations, the pronunciations are shown in parentheses before the relevant group of senses.

**record** *n.* ('rekɔ:d). **1.** an account in permanent form . . .  
~*vb.* (rɪ'kɔ:d). (*mainly tr.*) **19.** to set down in some permanent form . . .

### 2.5 Pronunciation of individual senses

If one sense of a headword has a different pronunciation from that of the rest, that pronunciation is given in parentheses after the sense number.

**conjure** ('kʌndʒə) *vb.* **1.** (*intr.*) to practise conjuring or be a conjuror. **2.** (*intr.*) to call upon supposed supernatural forces by spells and incantations. **3.** (*tr.*) (kən'dʒʊə) to appeal earnestly or strongly to: *I conjure you to help me* . . .

## Guide to the Use of the Dictionary

### 2.6 Foreign words and phrases

Foreign words or phrases are printed in boldface italic type and are given foreign-language pronunciations only unless they are regarded as having become accepted in English.

**haut monde** *French.* (o mɔ̃d) *n.* . . .

### 2.7 Foreign proper names

Foreign proper names, chiefly place names and biographies, are printed in large boldface roman type. If they do not have widely accepted conventional English pronunciations, they are given only foreign-language pronunciations.

**Milazzo** (*Italian* mi'lattso) *n.* a port in NE Sicily . . .

## 3 Inflected Forms

Inflected forms of nouns, verbs, and adjectives are shown immediately after the part-of-speech label if they are irregular or, in certain cases, if they are regular but might cause confusion.

### 3.1 Regular inflections

Where inflections are not shown, it may be assumed that they are formed as follows:

**3.1.1 nouns.** Regular plurals are formed by the addition of *-s* (e.g. *pencils, monkeys*) or, in the case of nouns ending in *-s*, *-x*, *-z*, *-ch*, or *-sh*, by the addition of *-es* (e.g. *losses*).

**3.1.2 verbs.** In regularly inflected verbs: (1) the third person singular of the present tense is formed by the addition of *-s* to the infinitive (e.g. *plays*) or, for verbs ending in *-s*, *-x*, *-z*, *-ch*, or *-sh*, by the addition of *-es* (e.g. *passes, reaches*); (2) the past tense and past participle are formed by the addition of *-ed* to the infinitive (e.g. *played*); (3) the present participle is formed by the addition of *-ing* to the infinitive (e.g. *playing*). Verbs that end in a consonant plus *-e* (e.g. *locate, snare*) regularly lose the final *-e* before the addition of *-ed* and *-ing*.

**3.1.3 adjectives.** The regular comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives are formed by adding *-er* and *-est*, respectively, to the base (e.g. *short, shorter, shortest*). Adjectives that end in a consonant plus *-e* regularly lose the *-e* before *-er* and *-est* (e.g. *fine, finer, finest*).

### 3.2 Irregular and unfamiliar inflections

Inflected forms are shown for the following:

**3.2.1 Nouns and verbs whose inflections involve a change in internal spelling.**

**goose** (gu:s) *n.*, *pl. geese* . . .

**drive** (draɪv) *vb.*, *drives, driving, drove* (drəʊv), *driven* . . .

**3.2.2 Nouns, verbs, and adjectives that end in a consonant plus *y*, where *y* is changed to *i* before inflectional endings.**

**augury** ('ɔ:gjʊri) *n.*, *pl. -ries* . . .

**3.2.3 Nouns having identical singular and plural forms.**

**sheep** (ʃi:p) *n.*, *pl. sheep* . . .

**3.2.4 Nouns that closely resemble others that form their plurals differently.**

**mongoose** ('mɒŋɡu:s) *n.*, *pl. -gooses* . . .

**3.2.5 Nouns that end in *-ful*, *-o*, and *-us*.**

**handful** ('hændfʊl) *n.*, *pl. -fuls* . . .

**tomato** (tə'mɑ:təʊ) *n.*, *pl. -atoes* . . .

**prospectus** (prə'spektʌs) *n.*, *pl. -tuses* . . .

**3.2.6 Nouns whose plurals are not regular English inflections.**

**basis** ('beɪsɪs) *n.*, *pl. -ses* (-si:z) . . .

**3.2.7 Plural nouns whose singulars are not regular English forms.**

**bacteria** (bæk'tɪərɪə) *pl.n.*, *sing. -rium* (-rɪəm) . . .

**3.2.8 Nouns whose plurals have regular spellings but involve a change in pronunciation.**

**house** *n.* (haus), *pl. houses* ('haʊzɪz) . . .

**3.2.9 Multiword nouns when it is not obvious which word takes a plural inflection.**

**attorney-at-law** *n.*, *pl. attorneys-at-law* . . .

**3.2.10 Latin names of constellations whose genitive forms are used in referring to individual stars, with *Alpha*, *Beta*, etc.**

**Libra** ('li:brə) *n.*, *Latin genitive Librae* ('li:brɪ) . . .

**3.2.11 Adjectives that change their roots to form comparatives and superlatives.**

**good** (ɡʊd) *adj.* **better, best** . . .

**3.2.12 Adjectives and verbs that double their final consonant before adding endings.**

**fat** (fæt) . . . ~*adj.* **fatter, fattest** . . .

**control** (kən'trəʊl) *vb.* **-trols, -trolling, -trolled** . . .

**3.2.13 Verbs and adjectives that end in a vowel plus *-e*.**

**canoe** (kə'nu:) . . . ~*vb.* **-noes, -noeing, -noed** . . .

**free** (fri:) *adj.* **freer, freest** . . . ~*vb.* **frees, freeing, freed** . . .

## 4 Parts of Speech

A part-of-speech label in italics precedes the account of the sense or senses relating to that part of speech.

### 4.1 Standard parts of speech

The following parts of speech, with abbreviations as shown, are standard in all widely taught forms of English grammar and need no further explanation:

adjective (*adj.*), adverb (*adv.*), conjunction (*conj.*), interjection (*interj.*), noun (*n.*), preposition (*prep.*), pronoun (*pron.*), verb (*vb.*).

### 4.2 Less traditional parts of speech

Certain other less traditional parts of speech have been adopted in this dictionary. They are as follows:

**4.2.1 determiners.** Such words as *that, this, my, his*, etc., which used to be classed as demonstrative and possessive adjectives and/or pronouns, have been classified in this dictionary as determiners.

The label *determiner* also replaces the traditional classification for words like *the, a, some, any*, as well as the numerals,

## Guide to the Use of the Dictionary

and possessives such as *my* and *your*. Many determiners can have a pronoun function without change of meaning, and this is indicated as in the following example:

**some** (səm; unstressed səm) *determiner*. . . 2. **a.** an unknown or unspecified quantity or amount of: *there's some rice on the table; he owns some horses*. **b.** (as pronoun; functioning as sing. or pl.): *we'll buy some*. . .

**4.2.2 sentence connectors.** This description replaces the traditional classification of certain words, such as *therefore* and *however*, as adverbs or conjunctions. These words link sentences together in continuous discourse rather in the manner of conjunctions; however, they are not confined to the first position in a clause as conjunctions are.

**4.2.3 sentence substitutes.** Sentence substitutes comprise words such as *yes*, *no*, *perhaps*, *definitely*, and *maybe*. They can stand as meaningful utterances by themselves. They are distinguished in this dictionary from interjections such as *ouch*, *ah*, *damn*, etc., which are expressions of emotional reaction rather than meaningful utterances.

### 4.3 Words used as more than one part of speech

If a word can be used as more than one part of speech, the account of the senses of one part of speech is separated from the others by a swung dash.

**lure** (lʊə) *vb.* (tr.) . . . 2. *Falconry.* to entice (a hawk or falcon) from the air to the falconer by a lure. ~n. 3. a person or thing that lures . . .

## 5 Descriptive, Grammatical, and Contextual Information

### 5.1 Adjectives and determiners

Some adjectives and determiners are restricted by usage to a particular position relative to the nouns they qualify. This is indicated by the following labels:

**5.1.1 postpositive** (used predicatively or after the noun, but not before the noun):

**ablaze** (ə'bleɪz) *adj.* (postpositive), *adv.* 1. on fire; burning . . .

**5.1.2 immediately postpositive** (always used immediately following the noun qualified and never used predicatively):

**galore** (gə'lɔː) *determiner.* (immediately postpositive) in great numbers or quantity: *there were daffodils galore in the park*. . .

**5.1.3 prenominal** (used before the noun, and never used predicatively):

**chief** (tʃiːf) . . . ~*adj.* 4. (prenominal) **a.** most important; principal. **b.** highest in rank or authority . . .

### 5.2 Intensifiers

Adjectives and adverbs that perform an exclusively intensifying function, with no addition of meaning, are described as (intensifier) without further explanation.

**blooming** ('bluːmɪŋ) *adv.*, *adj.* Brit. informal. (intensifier): *a blooming genius; blooming painful*. . .

### 5.3 Conjunctions

Conjunctions are divided into two classes, marked by the following labels placed in parentheses:

**5.3.1 coordinating.** Coordinating conjunctions connect words, phrases, or clauses that perform an identical function and are not dependent on each other. They include *and*, *but*, and *or*.

**5.3.2 subordinating.** Subordinating conjunctions introduce clauses that are dependent on a main clause in a complex sentence. They include *where*, *until*, and *before*.

**5.3.3** Some conjunctions, such as *while* and *whereas*, can function as either coordinating or subordinating conjunctions.

### 5.4 Singular and plural labelling of nouns

**5.4.1** If a particular sense of a noun is generally found in the plural form, this fact is noted in the phrase '*usually pl.* or *often pl.*'

**fly**<sup>1</sup> (flaɪ) *vb.* . . . 21. (often pl.) Also called: **fly front.** a closure that conceals a zip, buttons, or other fastening . . .

**5.4.2** If a noun is entered in its plural form but is also found occasionally in the singular, this fact is noted in the words '*sometimes sing.*'

**wits** (wɪts) *pl. n.* 1. (sometimes sing.) the ability to reason and act, esp. quickly . . .

**5.4.3** Headwords and senses that are apparently plural in form but that take a singular verb, etc., are marked '*functioning as sing.*'

**physics** ('fɪzɪks) *n.* (functioning as sing.) 1. the branch of science . . .

**5.4.4** Headwords and senses that appear to be singular, such as collective nouns, but that take a plural verb, etc., are marked '*functioning as pl.*'

**cattle** ('kætəl) *n.* (functioning as pl.) 1. bovid mammals of the tribe *Bovini* . . .

**5.4.5** Headwords and senses that may take either a singular or a plural verb, etc., are marked '*functioning as sing. or pl.*'

**bellows** ('beləʊz) *n.* (functioning as sing. or pl.) 1. Also called: **pair of bellows.** an instrument consisting of an air chamber . . .

### 5.5 Modifiers

A noun that is commonly used with adjectival force is labelled *modifier*.

If the sense of the modifier is strictly inferable from the sense of the noun, the modifier is shown without further explanation, with an example to illustrate its use.

**denim** ('denɪm) *n.* *Textiles.* 1. **a.** a hard-wearing twill-weave cotton fabric used for trousers, work clothes, etc. **b.** (as modifier): *a denim jacket*. . .

If the sense of the modifier is not inferable from the sense of the noun, or if it is related to more than one of the noun senses, an account of its meaning and/or usage is given separately.

**key**<sup>1</sup> (kiː) *n.* . . . 24. (modifier) of great importance: *a key issue*. . .

### 5.6 Verbs

The principal parts given are: 3rd person singular of the

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present tense; present participle; past tense; past participle if different from the past tense.

**5.6.1** When a sense of a verb (*vb.*) is restricted to transitive use, it is labelled (*tr.*); if it is intransitive only, it is labelled (*intr.*). If all the senses of a verb are either transitive or intransitive, the appropriate label appears before the first numbered sense and is not repeated.

Absence of a label is significant: it indicates that the sense may be used both transitively and intransitively.

If nearly all the senses of a verb are transitive, the label (*mainly tr.*) appears immediately before the first numbered sense. An individual sense may then be labelled (*also intr.*) to show that it is both transitive and intransitive, or it may be labelled (*intr.*) to show that it is intransitive only.

**carry** ('kæri) *vb.* . . . (*mainly tr.*) **1.** (*also intr.*) to take or bear (something) from one place to another: *to carry a baby in one's arms*. **2.** to transfer for consideration; take: *he carried his complaints to her superior* . . . **27.** (*intr.*) (of a ball, projectile, etc.) to travel through the air or reach a specified point: *his first drive carried to the green*.

Similarly, all the senses of a verb may be labelled (*mainly intr.*) and the labels (*also tr.*) and (*tr.*) introduced before individual senses as required. The labels (*usually tr.*) and (*usually intr.*) may be used at the beginning of a particular sense to indicate that the sense is usually but not always transitive or intransitive.

**wind**<sup>2</sup> (waɪnd) *vb.* . . . **5.** (*usually intr.*) to move or cause to move in a sinuous, spiral, or circular course: *the river winds through the hills* . . .

**5.6.2** When a sense of a verb covers both transitive and intransitive uses, a direct object that is typical of the class of direct objects taken by the verb in its transitive uses may be shown in parentheses. The parentheses should be ignored in order to obtain the intransitive sense.

**act** (ækt) *vb.* . . . **11.** to perform (a part or role) in a play . . .

**5.6.3** When the object of the transitive sense of a verb constitutes the subject of the intransitive sense, the account of its meaning is styled as follows:

**fire** (faɪə) . . . ~ *vb.* **25.** to discharge (a firearm or projectile) or (of a firearm, etc.) to be discharged . . .

**5.6.4** When the intransitive equivalent of the transitive sense of a verb functions with a preposition, an equivalent preposition is given in parentheses in the account of the meaning.

**differentiate** (dɪfə'renʃieɪt) *vb.* . . . **2.** (when *intr.*, often foll. by *between*) to perceive, show, or make a difference (in or between); discriminate.

### 5.6.5 Copulas

A verb that takes a complement is labelled *copula*.

**seem** (si:m) *vb.* (*may take an infinitive*) **1.** (*copula*) to appear to the mind or eye; look.

### 5.6.6 Phrasal verbs

Verbal constructions consisting of a verb and a preposition or a verb and an adverbial particle are given headword status if the meaning of the phrasal verb cannot be deduced from the separate meanings of the verb and the particle.

**5.6.6.1** Phrasal verbs are labelled to show four possible distinctions:

a transitive verb with an adverbial particle (*tr., adv.*); a transitive verb with a preposition (*tr., prep.*); an intransitive verb with an adverbial particle (*intr., adv.*); an intransitive verb with a preposition (*intr., prep.*):

**turn on** . . . **1.** (*tr., adv.*) . . . to cause (something) to operate by turning a knob, etc.: *to turn on the light*.

**take for** . . . **1.** (*tr., prep.*) . . . to consider or suppose to be, esp. mistakenly: *the fake coins were taken for genuine; who do you take me for?*

**break off** . . . **3.** (*intr., adv.*) to stop abruptly; halt: *he broke off in the middle of his speech*.

**turn on** . . . **2.** (*intr., prep.*) to depend or hinge on: *the success of the party turns on you*.

As with the labelling of other verbs, the absence of a label is significant. If there is no label (*tr.*) or (*intr.*), the verb may be used either transitively or intransitively. If there is no label (*adv.*) or (*prep.*), the particle may be either adverbial or prepositional.

**5.6.6.2** Any noun, adjective, or modifier formed from a phrasal verb is entered under the phrasal-verb headword. In some cases, where the noun or adjective is more common than the verb, the phrasal verb is entered after the noun/adjective form:

**breakaway** ('breɪkəweɪ) *n.* **1. a.** loss or withdrawal of a group of members from an association, club, etc. **b.** (*as modifier*): *a breakaway faction* . . . ~ *vb.* **break away.** (*intr., adv.*) . . . **4.** to withdraw or secede.

**5.6.6.3** A cross-reference is given at the main verb when related phrasal verbs are entered as headwords but are separated from it by more than five intervening entries.

**fit**<sup>1</sup> (fɪt) *vb.* . . . ~ See also **fit in**, **fit out**, **fit up**. [C14: probably from Middle Dutch *vitten* . . .]

## 5.7 Capitalization

When a particular sense of a word usually has an initial capital letter or, in the case of a capitalized headword, an initial lower-case letter, this is noted by the words '*sometimes not cap.*,' '*often cap.*,' etc.

## 6 Restrictive Labels and Phrases

**6.1** If a particular sense requires a label indicating restriction of use as to appropriateness, connotation, subject field, etc., an italicized label is placed immediately before the account of the relevant meaning. Occasionally a phrase in roman type, either placed in parentheses before the account of the meaning or following it, is used for an equivalent purpose.

If a label applies to all senses of a headword, it is placed immediately after the pronunciation (or inflections). If it applies to all senses of one part of speech, it is placed after the part-of-speech label.

### 6.2 Temporal labels

**6.2.1** *Archaic*. This label denotes a word or sense that is no longer in common use but may be found in literary works or used to impart a historical colour to contemporary writing.

**6.2.2** *Obsolete*. This label denotes a word or sense that is no longer in use. In specialist or technical fields the label often implies that the term has been superseded.

**6.2.3** The word 'formerly' is placed in parentheses before a sense or set of senses when the practice, concept, etc., being described, rather than the word itself, is obsolete or out-of-date.

### 6.3 Usage labels

**6.3.1** *Slang*. This refers to words or senses that are racy or extremely informal. The appropriate contexts in which slang is used are restricted: it is appropriate, for example, among members of a particular social group or those engaging in a particular activity, such as a sporting activity. Slang words are inappropriate in formal speech or writing.

**6.3.2** *Informal*. This label applies to words or senses that may be widely used, especially in conversation, letter-writing, etc., but that are not common in formal writing. Such words are subject to fewer contextual restrictions than slang words.

**6.3.3** *Taboo*. This label applies to words that are not acceptable in polite use. The reader is advised to avoid the use of such words if he or she wishes to be sure of avoiding giving offence.

**6.3.4** A number of other usage labels, such as *Ironical*, *Facetious*, and *Euphemistic*, are used where appropriate.

**6.3.5** *Not standard*. This label is given to words or senses that are frequently encountered but widely regarded as incorrect and therefore avoided by careful speakers and writers.

### 6.4 Connotative labels

**6.4.1** *Derogatory*. This implies that the connotations of a word are unpleasant with intent on the part of the speaker or writer.

**6.4.2** *Offensive*. This label indicates that a word might be regarded as offensive by the person described or referred to, even if the speaker uses the word without any malicious intention.

### 6.5 Subject-field labels

A number of italicized labels are used to indicate that a word or sense is used in a particular specialist or technical field. Subject-field labels are given either in full (e.g. *Astronomy*, *Philosophy*) or only slightly abbreviated, so that the full label may be easily understood.

### 6.6 National and regional labels

**6.6.1** Words or senses restricted to or associated with a particular country or region are labelled accordingly. The following labels are the ones most frequently used: *Austral.* (Australian), *Brit.* (British), *Canadian*, *Caribbean*, *Irish*, *N.Z.* (New Zealand), *S. African*, *Scot.* (Scottish), *U.S.* (United States).

**6.6.2** The label '*Brit.*' is used mainly to distinguish a particular word or sense from its North American equivalent or to identify a term or concept that does not exist in North American English. The North American equivalent may be given in boldface type after the appropriate numbered sense.

**6.6.3** Regional dialects (*Scot. and northern English dialect*, *Midland dialect*, etc.) have been specified as precisely as possible, even at the risk of overrestriction, in order to give the reader an indication of the appropriate regional flavour.

## 7 The Account of the Meaning

**7.1** The meaning of each headword in this dictionary is explained in one or more 'definitions,' together with information about context, collocation, and other relevant facts. The definitions are written in lucid English prose, and every word used in explaining a meaning is itself an entry in the dictionary, except for the New Latin words used for the taxonomy of plants and animals and certain scientific compound words, the meaning of which is deducible from the combining forms of which they are made up.

Where a headword has more than one sense, an account of each sense is given separately and each account is numbered in order to avoid confusion.

Each numbered sense is worded as far as possible so as to explain the headword alone, regardless of context. Thus, where reference is made to a collocational restriction, the collocational word is either ignored or represented by an appropriate equivalent word in parentheses.

**abound** (ə'baʊnd) *vb.* (*intr.*) . . . **2.** (foll. by *with* or *in*) to be plentifully supplied (with); teem (with): *the gardens abound with flowers* . . .

Example sentences and phrases illustrating the use of a sense are given at the end of many definitions.

### 7.2 Order of senses

As a general rule, where a headword has more than one sense, the first sense given is the one most common in current usage.

**complexion** (kəm'plekʃən) *n.* **1.** the colour and general appearance of a person's skin, esp. of the face. **2.** aspect, character, or nature: *the general complexion of a nation's finances*. **3.** *Obsolete.* **a.** the temperament of a person . . .

Where the editors consider that a current sense is the 'core meaning,' in that it illuminates the meaning of other senses, the core meaning may be placed first.

**competition** (kəm'pi'tɪʃən) *n.* **1.** the act of competing; rivalry. **2.** a contest in which a winner is selected from among two or more entrants. **3.** a series of games, sports events, etc. **4.** the opposition offered by a competitor or competitors. . . .

Subsequent senses are arranged so as to give a coherent account of the meaning of a headword. If a word is used as more than one part of speech, all the senses of each part of speech are grouped together in a single block. Within a part-of-speech block, closely related senses are grouped together; technical senses generally follow general senses; archaic and obsolete senses follow technical senses; idioms and fixed phrases are generally placed last.

### 7.3 Scientific and technical definitions

**7.3.1** *Units, physical quantities, formulas, etc.* In accordance with the recommendations of the International Standards Organization, all scientific measurements are expressed in SI units (*Système International d'Unités*). Measurements and quantities in more traditional units are often given as well as SI units.

**7.3.2** *Plants and animals.* When the scientific (Latin) names of phyla, divisions, classes, orders, families, genera, and species are used in definitions, they are printed in italic type and all except the specific name have an initial capital letter. Taxonomic information is always given.



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**moss** (mɒs) *n.* 1. any bryophyte of the class *Musci*, typically growing in dense mats on trees . . .

**capybara** (kæpɪ'ba:rə) *n.* the largest rodent: a pig-sized amphibious hystricomorph, *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris* . . .

### 7.4 Place names

**7.4.1** If a place has more than one name, the main entry is given at the name most common in present-day English-language contexts, with a cross-reference at other names. Thus, the main entry for the capital of Bavaria is at **Munich**, with a cross-reference at **München**. By contrast, the main entry for **Livorno** is given at that spelling rather than at **Leghorn**, an anglicized form that has now fallen into disuse. The name in the local language or languages is always given, and if no current anglicized name exists, the name chosen for main entry is generally that of the language of the current administrative authorities. Thus, the main entry is at **Brno**, with a cross-reference at **Brünn**. Historical names of importance are also given, with dates where these can be ascertained.

**Paris**<sup>1</sup> ('pærɪs; *French* pari) *n.* . . . Ancient name: **Lutetia**.

**Volgograd** (*Russian* vɔlɡə'grat; *English* 'vɒlɡə'græd) *n.* . . . Former names: **Tsaritsyn** (until 1925), **Stalingrad** (1925-61).

**7.4.2** Statistical information about places has been obtained from the most up-to-date and reliable sources available. Population figures have been compiled from the most recent census available at the time of going to press. The date of the census is always given. Where no census figure is available, the most reliable recent estimate has been given, with a date.

### 7.5 Biographical entries

**7.5.1** Biographical entries are entered separately from and immediately following place names of the same spelling. They are entered at the surname of the subject or at his title if that is the name by which he is better known and are grouped under one headword when the spelling of the surname (or title) is identical.

**7.5.2** Dates given for literary works are of first publication; dates for dramatic works are of first performance.

### 7.6 Abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols

Abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols are entered as headwords in the main alphabetical list. In line with modern practice stops are not used with symbols (**Ga**), nor for most abbreviations that are either strings of initials (**BBC**, **mph**) or contractions (**St**, **Mr**). However, stops are used for an abbreviation of a word that is not a contraction (**Brig.**) and for strings of lower-case initials that could form a word (**c.o.d.**). Alternative forms with stops are only shown for certain standard abbreviations (**eg** or **e.g.**, **ie** or **i.e.**) but it can be assumed that nearly all abbreviations are equally acceptable with or without stops.

### 7.7 Affixes and combining forms

Prefixes (e.g. **in-**<sup>1</sup>, **pre-**, **sub-**), suffixes (e.g. **-able**, **-ation**, **-ity**), and combining forms (e.g. **psycho-**, **-iatry**) have been entered as headwords if they are still used freely to produce new words in English.

## 8 Cross-references

**8.1** The main entry is always given at the most common spelling or form of the word. Cross-reference entries refer to

this main entry. Thus the entry for **deoxyribonucleic acid** cross-refers to **DNA**, where the full explanation is given.

### 8.2 Numbered cross-references

If a cross-reference entry applies to a particular sense of a headword, the number of the sense in question is given.

**alkanet** ('ælkə'net) *n.* . . . 4. another name for **puccoon** (sense 1) . . .

### 8.3 Comparisons

Cross-references introduced by the words 'See also' or 'Compare' refer the reader to additional information elsewhere in the dictionary. If the cross-reference is preceded by a swung dash, it applies to all the senses of the headword that have gone before it, unless otherwise stated. If there is no swung dash, the cross-reference applies only to the sense immediately preceding it.

### 8.4 Variant spellings

Variant spellings (e.g. **foetus** . . . a variant spelling of **fetus**) are generally entered as cross-references if their place in the alphabetical list is more than ten entries distant from the main entry.

### 8.5 Alternative names

Alternative names or terms are printed in boldface type and introduced by the words 'Also' or 'Also called.' If the alternative name or term is preceded by a swung dash, it applies to the entire entry.

## 9 Related Adjectives

Certain nouns, especially of Germanic origin, have related adjectives that are derived from Latin or French. For example, **mural** (from Latin) is an adjective related in meaning to **wall**. Such adjectives are shown in a number of cases after the sense (or part-of-speech block) to which they are related.

**wall** (wɔ:l) *n.* 1. a. a vertical construction made of stone, brick, wood, etc. . . . Related adj.: **mural** . . .

## 10 Idioms

Verbal and certain other idioms are given as separate senses of the key word in the idiom, generally at the end of the appropriate part-of-speech block of the key word, but if an idiom is closely related in meaning to a particular sense, it is usually entered immediately following that sense. Fixed noun phrases, such as **dark horse**, and certain other idioms are given full headword status.

## 11 The Etymology

**11.1** Etymologies are placed in square brackets after the account of the meaning. They are given for all headwords except those that are derivative forms (consisting of a base word and a suffix or prefix), compound words, inflected forms, and proper names. Thus, the headword **manage** has been given an etymology but the related headwords **manageable** (equivalent to **manage** plus the suffix **-able**), **management** (**manage** plus **-ment**), **manager** (**manage** plus **-er**), **manageress** (**manager** plus **-ess**), etc., do not have etymologies.

Inflected forms such as **saw**<sup>2</sup> (the past tense of **see**) and obvious compounds such as **mothball** are not given an etymology. Many headwords, such as **enlighten** and **prepossess**,

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consist of a prefix and a base word and are not accompanied by etymologies since the essential etymological information is shown for the component parts, all of which are entered in the dictionary as headwords in their own right (in this instance, **en-**<sup>1</sup>, **light**<sup>1</sup>, **-en**<sup>1</sup> and **pre-**, **possess**).

The purpose of the etymologies is to trace briefly the history of the word back from the present day, through its first recorded appearance in English, to its origin, often in some source language other than English. The etymologies show the history of the word both in English (wherever there has been significant change in form or sense) and in its pre-English source languages. Since records of both Latin and Ancient Greek exist, it is usually possible to show the actual Latin or Greek form of the source of an English word. In the case of English words of Germanic origin, cognate forms in one or more Germanic languages are shown. These cognate forms are words from the same (lost) Germanic originals, and the chief cognate languages cited are Old Norse, Swedish, Danish, German, Dutch, and Old Saxon. All the languages and linguistic terminology used in the etymologies are entries in their own right in the dictionary. Words printed in SMALL CAPITALS refer the reader to other headwords where relevant or additional information, either in the definition text or in the etymology, may be found.

### 11.2 Dating

The etymology records the first known occurrence (a written citation) of a word in English. Words first appearing in the language during the Middle English period or later are dated by century, abbreviated C.

**mantis** ... [C17: New Latin, from Greek: prophet, alluding to its praying posture]

This indicates that there is a written citation for **mantis** in the seventeenth century, when the word was in use as a New Latin term in the scientific vocabulary of the time. The absence of a New Latin or Greek form in the etymology means that the form of the word was the same in those languages as in English.

Native words from Old English are not dated, written records of Old English being comparatively scarce, but are simply identified as being of Old English origin.

**mar** (mɑ:): *vb.* **mars, marring, marred**. . . [Old English *merran*; compare Old Saxon *merrian* to hinder, Old Norse *merja* to bruise]

## 12 Derived Words or Run-on Entries

Words derived from a base word by the addition of suffixes such as *-ly*, *-ness*, etc., are entered in boldface type immediately after the etymology or after the last definition if there is no etymology. The meanings of such words may be deduced from the meanings of the suffix and the headword.

## 13 Listed Entries

In English many words are formed by adding productive prefixes such as *non-*, *over-*, *pre-*, *un-*, etc., to existing words. In most cases, the meanings of these words are obvious. Such words are listed alphabetically, without further explanation of the meaning, at the foot of the page or pages following the entry for the prefix in question.

## 14 Usage Notes

A brief note introduced by the label **Usage** has been added at the end of a number of entries in order to comment on matters of usage. These comments are based on the observed practice or preference of the majority of educated speakers and writers.

**ain't** (eɪnt) *Not standard. contraction of am not, is not, are not, have not, or has not: I ain't seen it.*

▷ **Usage.** Although the interrogative form *ain't I?* would be a natural contraction of *am not I?*, it is generally avoided in spoken English and never used in formal English.

# Pronunciation Key

The symbols used in the pronunciation transcriptions are those of the International Phonetic Alphabet. The following consonant symbols have their usual English values: *b, d, f, h, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, v, w, z*. The remaining symbols and their interpretations are listed in the tables below.

## English Sounds

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| ɑː  | as in <i>father</i> ('fɑːðə), <i>alms</i> (ɑːmz), <i>clerk</i> (klɑːk), <i>heart</i> (hɑːt), <i>sergeant</i> ('sɜːdʒənt)   |
| æ   | as in <i>act</i> (ækt), <i>Caedmon</i> ('kædmən), <i>plait</i> (plæt)  |
| aɪ  | as in <i>dive</i> (daɪv), <i>aisle</i> (aɪl), <i>guy</i> (gaɪ), <i>might</i> (maɪt), <i>rye</i> (raɪ)  |
| aɪə | as in <i>fire</i> ('faɪə), <i>buyer</i> ('baɪə), <i>liar</i> ('laɪə), <i>tyre</i> ('taɪə)  |
| aʊ  | as in <i>out</i> (aʊt), <i>bough</i> (baʊ), <i>crowd</i> (kraʊd), <i>slouch</i> (slaʊtʃ)   |
| aʊə | as in <i>flour</i> ('flaʊə), <i>cower</i> ('kaʊə), <i>flower</i> ('flaʊə), <i>sour</i> ('saʊə)   |
| ɛ   | as in <i>bet</i> (bet), <i>ate</i> (et), <i>bury</i> ('beri), <i>heifer</i> ('heɪə), <i>said</i> (sed), <i>says</i> (sez)  |
| eɪ  | as in <i>paid</i> (peɪd), <i>day</i> (deɪ), <i>deign</i> (deɪn), <i>gauge</i> (geɪdʒ), <i>grey</i> (greɪ), <i>neigh</i> (neɪ)  |
| ɛə  | as in <i>bear</i> (beə), <i>dare</i> (deə), <i>prayer</i> (preə), <i>stairs</i> (steəz), <i>where</i> (weə)  |
| ɡ   | as in <i>get</i> (get), <i>give</i> (ɡɪv), <i>ghoul</i> (ɡuːl), <i>guard</i> (ɡɑːd), <i>examine</i> (ɪɡ'zæmɪn)   |
| ɪ   | as in <i>pretty</i> ('prɪti), <i>build</i> (bɪld), <i>busy</i> ('biːzi), <i>nymph</i> (nɪmf), <i>pocket</i> ('pɒkɪt), <i>sieve</i> (sɪv), <i>women</i> ('wɪmɪn)                    |
| iː  | as in <i>see</i> (siː), <i>aesthete</i> ('iːsthiːt), <i>evil</i> ('iːvəl), <i>magazine</i> ('mæɡə'ziːn), <i>receive</i> (rɪ'siːv), <i>siege</i> (siːdʒ)                            |
| ɪə  | as in <i>fear</i> (fɪə), <i>beer</i> (biə), <i>mere</i> (mɪə), <i>tier</i> (tɪə)   |
| j   | as in <i>yes</i> (jes), <i>onion</i> ('ʌnjən), <i>vignette</i> (vɪ'njet)   |
| ɒ   | as in <i>pot</i> (pɒt), <i>botch</i> (bɒtʃ), <i>sorry</i> ('sɒri)  |
| əʊ  | as in <i>note</i> (nəʊt), <i>beau</i> (bəʊ), <i>dough</i> (daʊ), <i>hoe</i> (həʊ), <i>slow</i> (sləʊ), <i>yeoman</i> ('jəʊmən)   |
| ɔː  | as in <i>thaw</i> (θɔː), <i>broad</i> (brɔːd), <i>drawer</i> ('drɔːə), <i>fault</i> (fɔːlt), <i>halt</i> (hɔːlt), <i>organ</i> ('ɔːɡən)  |
| ɔɪ  | as in <i>void</i> (vɔɪd), <i>boy</i> (bɔɪ), <i>destroy</i> (di'strɔɪ)  |
| ʊ   | as in <i>pull</i> (pʊl), <i>good</i> (ɡʊd), <i>should</i> (ʃʊd), <i>woman</i> ('wʊmən)   |
| uː  | as in <i>zoo</i> (zuː), <i>do</i> (duː), <i>queue</i> (kjuː), <i>shoe</i> (ʃuː), <i>spew</i> (spjuː), <i>true</i> (truː), <i>you</i> (juː)   |
| ʊə  | as in <i>poor</i> (puə), <i>skewer</i> ('skjuə), <i>sure</i> (ʃʊə)   |
| ə   | as in <i>potter</i> ('pɒtə), <i>alone</i> (ə'ləʊn), <i>furious</i> ('fjʊəriəs), <i>nation</i> ('neiʃən), <i>the</i> (ðə)   |
| ʒː  | as in <i>fern</i> (fɜːn), <i>burn</i> (bɜːn), <i>fir</i> (fɜː), <i>learn</i> (lɜːn), <i>term</i> (tɜːm), <i>worm</i> (wɜːm)  |
| ʌ   | as in <i>cut</i> (kʌt), <i>flood</i> (flʌd), <i>rough</i> (rʌf), <i>son</i> (sʌn)  |
| ʃ   | as in <i>ship</i> (ʃɪp), <i>election</i> (ɪ'lekʃən), <i>machine</i> (mə'ʃiːn), <i>mission</i> ('mɪʃən), <i>pressure</i> ('preʃə), <i>schedule</i> ('ʃedjuːl), <i>sugar</i> ('ʃʊɡə) |
| ʒ   | as in <i>treasure</i> ('treʒə), <i>azure</i> ('æʒə), <i>closure</i> ('kləʊʒə), <i>evasion</i> (ɪ'veɪʒən)   |
| tʃ  | as in <i>chew</i> (tʃuː), <i>nature</i> ('neɪtʃə)  |
| dʒ  | as in <i>jaw</i> (dʒɔː), <i>adjective</i> ('ædʒɪktɪv), <i>lodge</i> (lɒdʒ), <i>soldier</i> ('səʊldʒə), <i>usage</i> ('juːsɪdʒ)   |
| θ   | as in <i>thin</i> (θɪn), <i>strength</i> (streŋθ), <i>three</i> (θriː)   |
| ð   | as in <i>these</i> (ðiːz), <i>bathe</i> (beɪð), <i>lather</i> ('lɑːðə)   |
| ŋ   | as in <i>sing</i> (sɪŋ), <i>finger</i> ('fɪŋɡə), <i>sling</i> (slɪŋ)   |
| ɹ   | indicates that the following consonant ( <i>l</i> or <i>n</i> ) is syllabic, as in <i>bundle</i> ('bʌndl) and <i>button</i> ('bʌtɹn)   |
| x   | as in Scottish <i>loch</i> (lɒx). See also below   |
| ɹɪ  | as in Scottish <i>aye</i> (əɪ), <i>bile</i> (bəɪl), <i>byke</i> (bəɪk).  |

## Foreign Sounds

The symbols above are also used to represent foreign sounds where these are similar to English sounds. However, certain common foreign sounds require symbols with markedly different values, as follows:

|    |   |
|----|---|
| ɑ  | <i>a</i> in French <i>ami</i> , German <i>Mann</i> , Italian <i>pasta</i> : a sound between English (æ) and (ɑː), similar to the vowel in Northern English <i>cat</i> or London <i>cut</i> .                              |
| ɑː | <i>aas</i> in French <i>bas</i> : a sound made with a tongue position similar to that of English (ɑː), but shorter.   |
| e  | <i>é</i> in French <i>été</i> , <i>eh</i> in German <i>sehr</i> , <i>e</i> in Italian <i>che</i> : a sound similar to the first part of the English diphthong (eɪ) in <i>day</i> or to the Scottish vowel in <i>day</i> . |
| i  | <i>i</i> in French <i>il</i> , German <i>Idee</i> , Spanish <i>filo</i> , Italian <i>signor</i> : a sound made with a tongue position similar to that of English (iː), but shorter.                                       |
| ɔ  | <i>o</i> in Italian <i>no</i> , French <i>bonne</i> , German <i>Sonne</i> : a vowel resembling English (ɒ), but with a higher tongue position and more rounding of the lips.  |
| o  | <i>o</i> in French <i>rose</i> , German <i>so</i> , Italian <i>voce</i> : a sound between English (ɔː) and (uː) with closely rounded lips, similar to the Scottish vowel in <i>so</i> .                                   |
| u  | <i>ou</i> in French <i>genou</i> , <i>u</i> in German <i>kulant</i> , Spanish <i>puna</i> : a sound made with a tongue position similar to that of English (uː), but shorter.   |
| y  | <i>y</i> in French <i>tu</i> , <i>ü</i> in German <i>über</i> or <i>fünf</i> : a sound made with a tongue position similar to that of English (iː), but with closely rounded lips.  |
| ø  | <i>eu</i> in French <i>deux</i> , <i>ö</i> in German <i>schön</i> : a sound made with the tongue position of (e), but with closely rounded lips.  |
| œ  | <i>œu</i> in French <i>œuf</i> , <i>ö</i> in German <i>zwölf</i> : a sound made with a tongue position similar to that of English (e), but with open rounded lips.  |
| ~  | above a vowel indicates nasalization, as in French <i>un</i> (œ̃), <i>bon</i> (bɔ̃), <i>vin</i> (vɛ̃), <i>blanc</i> (blɑ̃).   |
| x  | <i>ch</i> in German <i>Buch</i> , <i>j</i> in Spanish <i>Juan</i> .   |
| ç  | <i>ch</i> in German <i>ich</i> : a (j) sound as in <i>yes</i> , said without voice; similar to the first sound in <i>hug</i> .  |
| β  | <i>b</i> in Spanish <i>Habana</i> : a voiced fricative sound similar to (v), but made by the two lips.  |
| ʎ  | <i>ll</i> in Spanish <i>llamar</i> , <i>gl</i> in Italian <i>consiglio</i> : similar to the (lj) sequence in <i>million</i> , but with the tongue tip lowered and the sounds said simultaneously.                         |
| ɥ  | <i>u</i> in French <i>lui</i> : a short (y).  |
| ɲ  | <i>gn</i> in French <i>vigne</i> , Italian <i>gnocchi</i> , <i>ñ</i> in Spanish <i>España</i> : similar to the (nj) sequence in <i>onion</i> , but with the tongue tip lowered and the two sounds said simultaneously.    |
| ɣ  | <i>g</i> in Spanish <i>luego</i> : a weak (g) made with voiced friction.  |

## Length

The symbol : denotes length and is shown together with certain vowel symbols when the vowels are typically long.

## Stress

Three grades of stress are shown in the transcriptions by the presence or absence of marks placed immediately before the affected syllable. Primary or strong stress is shown by ' , while secondary or weak stress is shown by . Unstressed syllables are not marked. In *photographic* ('fəʊtə'græfɪk), for example, the first syllable carries secondary stress and the third primary stress, while the second and fourth are unstressed.



# The Pronunciation of British English

by A. C. Gimson

## The Origins

English has been spoken in Britain for some fourteen centuries. During this time, it has undergone such fundamental changes (affecting grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) that the speech of an inhabitant of the London region of the 7th century would be totally unintelligible to the modern Londoner. The earliest form of English, brought by Germanic invaders from the 5th century onwards, is known as *Old English* and extends up to about the 11th century. This general term itself embraces a number of separate dialects deriving from the different geographical origins of the invaders. It was the West Saxon form of the South and the Southwest of the country that ultimately became regarded as a standard language, and it is in this form that most of the extant texts are written. From about the 7th century, Old English began to be written with the Latin alphabet, probably introduced into England by Irish missionaries. The Latin alphabet was, however, inadequate to express the more complex phonological system of the dialects of Old English. New letters, such as 'æ,' were added to indicate a value between that of Italian *e* and *a*; digraphs, such as 'th,' had to be used for consonant sounds that were unknown in Italian. Although there was a good deal of agreement about the orthography to be applied to the Old English sound system, there are in the texts of the period considerable variations in spelling forms as between one dialect and another and also between scribes. In fact, English has had a standardized form of spelling for not much more than two hundred years, the present apparent inconsistencies in our orthography reflecting the historical development of the language.

It can be said that the next major influence on our language — that of the French dominance from the 11th century onwards — affected spelling more than pronunciation (although it added enormously to our stock of words). During this period of *Middle English* (roughly 1100-1450), English remained the language of the people, but French was used by the aristocracy as well as in administrative and legal proceedings. It was not until the end of this era that English became re-established as the language used by all sections of society. By then, various French spelling forms had been taken over, e.g. *u* was replaced by *ou* in a word like *house* because of the different value attributed to *u* in French borrowings; and the *ch* sound of a word like *chin* (originally spelt with *c*) took on the French spelling of words such as *chamber*. By the time of Chaucer, the language began to look more like Modern English and would be to a large extent intelligible to the modern ear.

In the following period, *Early Modern English* (1450-1600), the pronunciation of the language became increasingly similar to that of today. A modern Londoner would have little difficulty in understanding the speech used in the plays performed at Shakespeare's *Globe*, although it would make a somewhat rustic impression on his ear. Nevertheless, he would notice that there was still considerable variation in the spelling forms used, to some extent in printed works (where the styles depended upon the conventions adopted by individual printers) but more particularly in the handwritten letters of individuals (who continued to spell largely according to their own phonetic principles and thus provided us with a good deal of information about contemporary pronunciation). It is not until the end of the 18th century that English began to sound more completely like the language we speak today. What is more, with the appearance of the great dictionaries of that century, the orthography was standardized into a form almost identical with our present one. However, even in the last two centuries, there have been notable pronunciation changes, which demonstrate that the sound system of the language is constantly undergoing evolution. The ambiguities of spelling that reflect four-

teen centuries of linguistic history remain to puzzle the native user and to frustrate the foreign learner.

## The Present Situation

With so many influences at work on the language for so long, it is hardly surprising that the pronunciation of English in Britain today presents an extremely complex picture. It is possible to discern three main causes for variation, relating to the speaker's regional origin, his place in society, and his generation.

Elements of regional differences of pronunciation are evident today, to such an extent that a cockney and a Glaswegian may still have serious difficulties of communication in speech. Englishmen are still readily able to identify the part of the country from which a person comes simply by listening to his speech, despite the fears of those who predict that dialect forms will soon disappear completely. Indeed, these regional forms of speech are often related to gross statements of regional prejudice — the Southerner who regards the speech of the Northerner as overblunt, and the Northerner who characterizes the speaker with a Southern accent as affected. Dialect differences of pronunciation are therefore still important both for reasons of intelligibility and also in social terms. It is worth remarking too that, of all the various accents of British English, that of the London region has developed most rapidly, the speech of the other regions remaining closer to the historical origins of the language.

But the pronunciation of English in Britain has also a more purely social significance. As has been stated, at one time the upper classes would speak French whereas the rest of the people spoke English. In more recent centuries, when English was in universal use, there emerged different types of pronunciation in any region relating to the speaker's position in society, e.g. the popular speech forms of the working man, full of the historical characteristics of the region, as opposed to the pronunciation used by the professional and upper classes, which was modified towards a general standard. It can be said that the notion of a socially prestigious standard of pronunciation arose explicitly in the 16th century, when grammarians began to recommend that the only acceptable form of pronunciation was that used in London and at the Court, i.e. the speech of educated people in the Southeast of England. Such a notion of standard pronunciation, based on social criteria, became increasingly accepted during the next three centuries, so that in the middle of the 19th century the philologist Alexander J. Ellis was able to characterize it as 'received pronunciation' — a term which is used to this day (often in an abbreviated form as RP). A century ago, persons of the ruling classes would pronounce English in the same way wherever they lived in Britain. This form of pronunciation had the advantage, therefore, of being widely intelligible. Moreover, it was important for the ambitious, who might wish to move upwards in society, to change their pronunciation. This was the sociolinguistic climate in which Bernard Shaw wrote his *Pygmalion*, a play which had a greater social significance at the time of its first production than it can possibly have now. In the first half of this century, this standard was adopted as a model by more and more of the population, despite vigorous opposition from a number of interests, notably the Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges, and his Society for Pure English, who advocated a standard based on a more Northern type. It was on the grounds of wide intelligibility that, in the 1930s, the BBC decided to adopt 'received pronunciation' as the form to be used by announcers. Indeed, the British public became so accustomed to this style of speech that they were suspicious of any attempt by the BBC to introduce news readers with a regional pronunciation. Moreover, the broadcasting media exposed more and more of the population to the