

ELUSIVE WORDS • AWKWARD WORDS
IMPRESSIVE WORDS • PERSUASIVE WORDS
PRECISE WORDS • TECHNICAL WORDS

READER'S DIGEST
REVERSE
DICTIONARY

**HOW TO FIND THE WORDS ON THE TIP
OF YOUR TONGUE**

Reader's Digest

REVERSE DICTIONARY

READER'S DIGEST REVERSE DICTIONARY

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REVERSE DICTIONARY

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Contributors

EDITOR

John Ellison Kahn, MA, DPhil

CONSULTANT EDITOR

Robert Ilson, MA, PhD

*Associate Director of The Survey of English Usage
Honorary Research Fellow, University College, London
Editor, International Journal of Lexicography*

*The publishers thank the following
for their valuable editorial and lexicographic
contributions to this book:*

Faye Carney, MA

Sylvia Chalker, MA

Emily Driver, BA

Nicholas Jones, MA

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From the idea to the word

THE REVERSE DICTIONARY AND HOW IT WORKS

Everyone has experienced the frustration of mislaying a familiar word. You know what you want to say; you know that the precise word exists that would enable you to say it; and you know that you *know* this word ... but when you reach for it, it's not there. That's when the pantomime of exasperation begins: you snap your fingers, you frown, you rummage about in your mental attic, you say "It's on the tip of my tongue" or "What's that word — oh, *you* know." But the word, hovering just out of reach, continues to elude and tantalise you.

Psychologists studying this phenomenon compare it to being on the brink of a sneeze. Anticipation ... concentration ... and — frustration. What's needed, so to speak, is a pinch of snuff. The *Reverse Dictionary* provides one. It's a linguistic snuffbox, helping to release that pent-up sneeze. The relief it affords should be considerable.

Several angles of attack

The *Reverse Dictionary* is above all a word-finder. Its purpose is to identify the precise word for an idea that may be in your mind but that you can't express. You have the idea; the book provides the word. It does this by directing you from a familiar word connected with the idea to the elusive word you are looking for — from the word you know to the word you need.

The familiar "cue word" leads to the tricky "target word" in any of three different ways:

- by means of a definition leading you directly to the target word

- by referring you to a chart of terms on a particular subject, with the target word among them

- by referring you to an illustration on which the target word is pinpointed.

Suppose you are trying to recall or discover the name for the sculpture of a woman that serves as a column supporting the roof of a building in ancient Greece. Various words come to mind as possible cues — *woman*, say, or *sculpture*, or *column*. Look up any of these cue words, and it will lead you to the target word CARYATID. *Woman* takes you there by way of a definition, *sculpture* by way of a chart of sculpture terms, and *column* by way of an illustration.

Note the distinctive feature of this approach in each case: instead of starting with a headword and moving

on to the definition, as in a conventional dictionary, the *Reverse Dictionary* starts with the definition, as it were, and leads from there to the word you are seeking — hence the title of the book.

Hitting the target

Most target words can be approached from several directions. First, you can look up any of several *synonyms*. If you're trying to remember the word TRAJECTORY, for instance, you'll find it if you look up **path** or **curve** ("curved flight path...") or **flight** ("flight path..."). Or you may approach the target word from its cluster of *associations* rather than its synonyms: a ball thrown through the air has a trajectory, so you might aim at the target word by looking up **ball** or **throw**. And since missiles too have trajectories, you could use the cue word **missile** to hit the target.

The linguistic side of the human mind works by lateral thinking as well as straight-line logical thinking, and many cue words have been selected to make provision for this. You can often approach a target word through its *collocations* — that is, through phrases in which it commonly occurs, phrases such as *connubial bliss*, *a sedentary job*, and *rancid butter*. You might accordingly look up the cue words **bliss**, **job**, and **butter** to find the respective target words CONNUBIAL, SEDENTARY, and RANCID.

A target word may even be cued by its *opposite* if that seems a promising approach. So the term *relegation* could be found by looking up **promotion**, and LEVITY could be found by looking up **serious**.

Clearly it would be impracticable to provide every single possible approach to a target word, but the most promising and productive approaches will be there. If you don't find the cue word you want first time, just try again. "What's the word for that tiny Japanese tree — a sort of pot plant? ... oh, *you* know." You won't find the answer if you look up **tiny** — there are hundreds of tiny things, so **tiny** isn't really a useful cue word. But if you try again, and look up **miniature**, or **dwarf**, or simply **tree**, or **pot plant**, or the chart of *Japanese terms* ... you'll hit the target each time: BONSAI!

Enriching your vocabulary

The *Reverse Dictionary* is more than just a word-finder. It's a vocabulary-builder too. It sets out to extend your command of words — to bring into the centre of your working vocabulary those words that have up to now

been only on its fringes. And it goes a step further — venturing beyond the fringes of the familiar, to give you access to the hinterland of the English language.

For the most part, the target words are moderately tricky, words at the level of TRAJECTORY, CONNUBIAL, and RELEGATION, or CORUSCATING, CRUSTACEAN, EUTHANASIA, ECLECTIC, PARSIMONIOUS, NONCHALANT, METAMORPHOSIS, EXUBERANT, PANACEA ...

But some target words seem to fall outside this middle range, and to be either very familiar or very obscure. This is often because the *meaning*, rather than the word, is under consideration. Take the terms STAR, CROWN, GLOVE BOX, and PEEL — extremely simple terms surely, and yet not so simple when it comes to connecting them with special meanings that you might have in mind. The term STAR can refer to the white spot on a horse's forehead (you'll find it at the cue word *horse*). The small, notched winding knob on an old-fashioned watch is a CROWN. The glove box in the dashboard of a car is not the only glove box — there's a laboratory GLOVE BOX too, the glass box with rubber gloves sealed into the side for handling dangerous radioactive or poisonous substances. And when a baker uses a long flat shovel to take bread or pies out of the oven, the implement that he's wielding is a PEEL.

Words you didn't know

Conversely, the words RETIARIUS, AUTOTOMY, ENTASIS, and ROWEL may be utterly unfamiliar to you. But you probably are familiar with their meanings — with the *ideas* underlying the words. A RETIARIUS was the gladiator in ancient Rome who went into the arena armed with a net and trident rather than a sword. When a lizard sheds its tail to escape an attacker, the process is known as AUTOTOMY. The slight bulge that makes a column on a Greek temple appear straight when viewed from below is called an ENTASIS. And the small toothed wheel on the end of the spur on a cowboy's boot is a ROWEL.

Sometimes even the idea, not just the word, may be unfamiliar to you, as with MOXIBUSTION perhaps, referring to a kind of alternative therapy that involves setting fire to herbs placed on the patient's skin.

There's a sprinkling of such complex terms spicing the text throughout — words you didn't know you didn't know.

Entertaining words

Some of these unfamiliar terms are just high-falutin synonyms for perfectly familiar words: ANTHROPOPHAGI for *cannibals*, or LYCANTHROPE for *werewolf*. Some are the unfamiliar technical terms for all-too-familiar realities. The romantic-sounding BORBORYGMUS refers

to the less than romantic condition of tummy rumbling. The grandiose SINGULTUS refers to the humble hiccup. And the resonant STERNUTATION is simply — sneezing.

Such words would, of course, sound very pompous if used freely in conversation, and tend to be pretentious even in formal writing, but they're certainly worth *knowing*. And they're fun. This points to a third function of the *Reverse Dictionary*: providing enjoyment. Supplementing the book's value as a word-finder and a vocabulary-builder is its entertainment value. Many of the obscurer terms in the text have been included for sheer fun — swashbuckling, cheeky, invigorating, their claims are irresistible. A tightrope walker can be called a FUNAMBULIST, and a striptease artist an ECDYSIAS (the word *ecdysis* is the technical term for the sloughing of skin, as by a snake or insect). A DIASTEMA is a wide gap between the teeth, and a DEIPNOSOPHIST is an expert at dinner-table conversation. (Try dropping that casually into the conversation at the dinner table!)

Never at a loss for words

Finally, the book affords you an opportunity for some linguistic creativity of your own. Hundreds of the target words are word-elements rather than fully fledged words — prefixes, suffixes, and combining forms, mostly from Greek and Latin roots ... terms such as the fairly familiar ULTRA-, beyond-, and PSEUDO-, false-, and the less familiar -DENDRO-, referring to a tree (as in *rhododendron*), and -LATRY, meaning worship (as in *idolatry*). These are the materials on which you as wordsmith can get to work if the word you are groping for persists in eluding you. From the last two elements just mentioned, for instance, you could forge the term DENDROLATRY — that is, tree-worship, as practised by various pagan cultures in ancient times. Suppose you want to describe an insect or reptile that eats ants: look up **ant-** to find MYRMECO-, and **-eat-** to find -PHAGOUS — and there you have it, MYRMECOPHAGOUS. Or if you want to refer to a seven-sided coin, such as the British fifty-pence piece: **seven-** gives you HEPTA-, and **-sided** gives you -GON — yielding HEPTAGON.

So you can use the *Reverse Dictionary* inventively, as well as for reference. Use it for fun, as well as for illumination. Consider it a linguistic treasure-chest, as well as a linguistic snuffbox. Rummage among its pages from time to time to enjoy some of the coruscating jewels of the English vocabulary.

Happy browsing then — and successful sternutation.

The Editors

Part One

THE
REVERSE
DICTIONARY

A

a or **an** in English grammar, or equivalent word in other languages, introducing without strictly identifying the noun following it INDEFINITE ARTICLE

A-Z, or similar full range of a series GAMUT

abandon See **depart**, **give up**, **energy**, **enthusiasm**

abandoned child or baby, of unknown parentage FOUNDLING

abandoning or voluntary relinquishment of a claim, right, or privilege WAIVER

abbey See illustration, page 12

– abbey or cathedral in some cities MINSTER

– head of a convent, abbey, or similar kind of religious community SUPERIOR

abbot, bishop, or clergymen of similar standing PRELATE

abbreviate, cut short TRUNCATE

abbreviation consisting of initial letters, especially one, such as **BBC**, that unlike an acronym is pronounced as letters INITIALISM

– abbreviation in the form of a symbol or letter, such as **&**, representing an entire word or phrase LOGOGRAM, LOGOGRAPH

abdomen, abdomen's upper area, below the ribs HYPOCHONDRIUM

– membrane lining the abdominal cavity and covering most of the organs PERITONEUM

– network of nerves in the abdomen, spreading to the intestines and liver SOLAR PLEXUS

– relating to the abdomen COELIAC

abdominal, relating to the front of the body VENTRAL

– abdominal pain COLIC

Aberdeen – person born or living in Aberdeen ABERDONIAN

ability, inherent power, or skill FACULTY, CAPACITY, APTITUDE

– ability or character CALIBRE

– ability or expertise, especially in judging shrewdly ACUMEN

– ability that has still not proved itself in actual successes POTENTIAL

able See also **skilful**, **clever**, **expert**

– able, capable, properly equipped or suitably qualified COMPETENT, PROFICIENT

– extremely able, deft, expert

ADROIT, ADEPT

abnormal See also **odd**

– abnormal, as in sexual behaviour DEVIANT

– abnormal, departing from the norm or convention ECCENTRIC, IDIOSYNCRATIC, OUTRÉ, ABERRANT

– abnormal, differing from what is natural and usual or expected PRETERNATURAL

– abnormal, inconsistent, out of keeping, odd ANOMALOUS, INCONGRUOUS

– abnormal, through being corrupted PERVERTED

– abnormal sexual behaviour or act PERVERSION

abnormal- DYS-, PARA-

abnormality such as a disease or disturbed mental state PATHOLOGY

-abnormality- -OSIS, TERAT-, TERATO-

abolish See **destroy**, **get rid of**

abominable snowman YETI

Aboriginal terms See chart, and also **Australian terms**

abortion – bring on an abortion artificially, especially by the use of medical drugs INDUCE, TERMINATE

– emptying of the womb, especially for an abortion, by means of suction through a tube VACUUM ASPIRATION

about, concerning, regarding, relating to APROPOS OF

– about or approximately, as written before an uncertain date CIRCA

about- PERI-

about to happen IMMINENT, IMPENDING

about-turn, U-turn, reversal of attitude or policy VOLTE-FACE

above, term used to refer to a previous section or earlier part of a text SUPRA

– above, overlooking, or on top of SURMOUNTING

ABORIGINAL TERMS

alcheringa/ dreamtime	mythical Golden Age of the past, or time of the creation of the natural world
bora	initiation ceremony for boys
boyla	witch doctor
bullroarer/ thunderstick	small wooden tile that booms when whirled about on a thong, used in religious ceremonies
bunyip	legendary monster haunting swamps and waterholes
churinga	sacred charm or amulet of stone; bullroarer
corroboree	ceremonial gathering and dance festival
didgeridoo	droning wind instrument with a long wooden tube
gunyah	shelter or hut, typically of branches and bark
lubra	Aboriginal woman or wife
nulla nulla	club or heavy stick
waddy	heavy wooden war club or throwing stick
walkabout	period of wandering in the bush, for spiritual renewal
woomera	hooked stick for launching spears or darts
wurley	shelter or hut, typically of branches, leaves and grass matting

above- EPI-, HYPER-, SUPER-, SUPRA-, SUR-, TRANS-

abrasive mineral, aluminium oxide
CORUNDUM

abroad – person living abroad on money sent from home REMITTANCE MAN

abrupt in manner CURT

abscess – abnormal opening or passage between a hollow organ and the skin, as caused by an abscess
FISTULA

absence or departure that is without permission or notification FRENCH LEAVE

– absence or opposite of something positive or real NEGATION

absent – while absent, although absent IN ABSENTIA

absent-minded, inattentive, daydreaming or distracted DISTRAIT, ABSTRACTED, PREOCCUPIED

– absent-minded through being excessively idealistic or romantic QUIXOTIC

– absent-mindedness, daydreaming WOOLGATHERING

absentee, especially from school or work TRUANT

abso-bloody-lutely – separation of the parts of a word by a word or words interposed, as in *abso-bloody-lutely* TMESIS

absolute, certain, without reserva-

tion, as a denial might be CATEGORICAL

– absolute, complete, utter outright RANK, UNADULTERATED, UNEQUIVOCAL

– absolute power, non-democratic rule, dictatorship or tyranny DESPOTISM, TOTALITARIANISM, AUTARCHY, AUTOCRACY

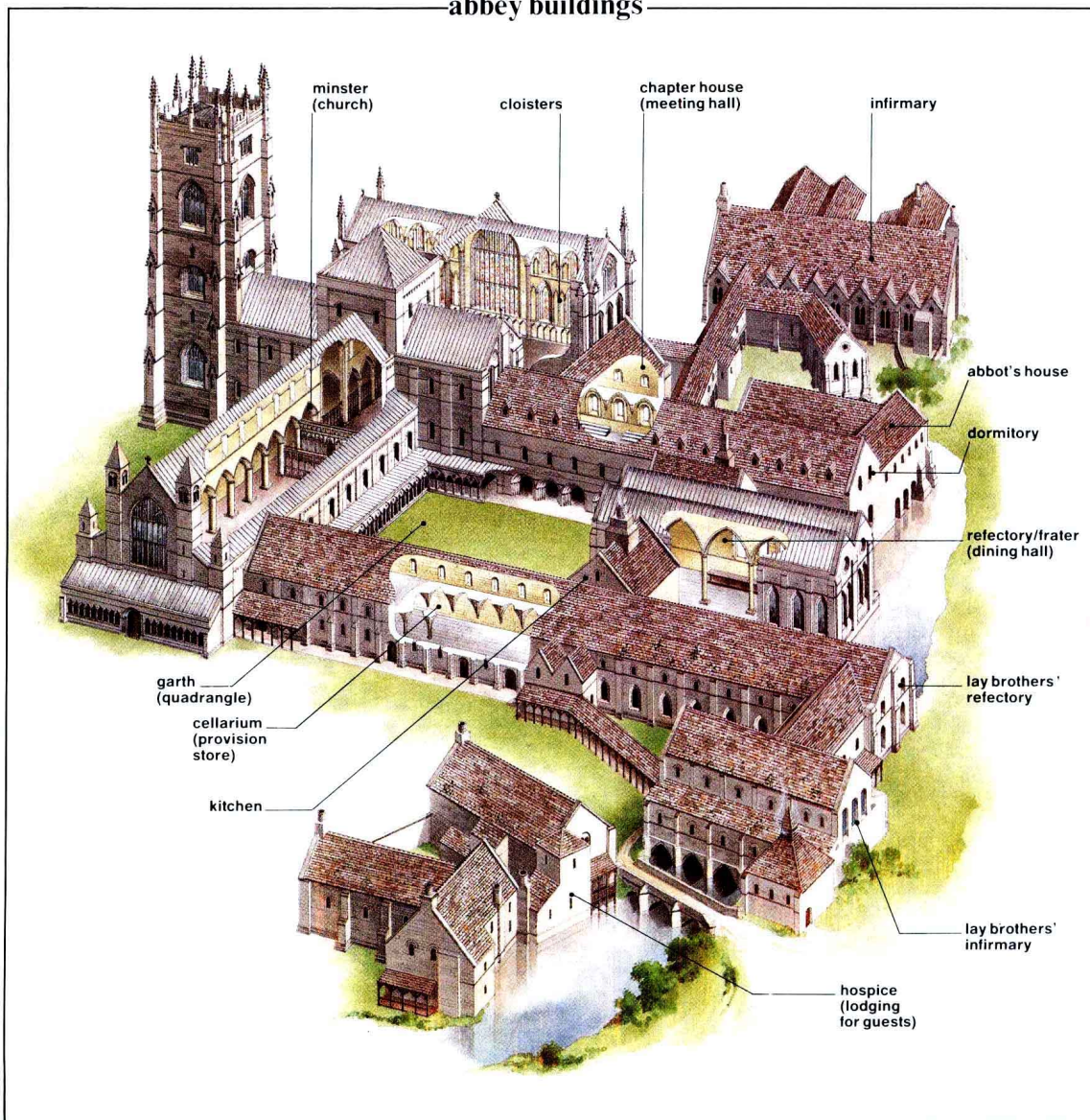
– absolute ruler who is enlightened, and well-disposed towards his subjects BENEVOLENT DESPOT

absolution granted or confession heard by a priest SHRIFT

– obtain or give absolution at confession SHRIVE

absorb, cause to become a full mem-

abbey buildings



ber, part, or participant **INTEGRATE**, **ASSIMILATE**, **INCORPORATE**
– absorb by or as if by swallowing **INGEST**

– absorbing gas or liquid **POROUS**
– process, unlike absorption, by which a thin film of substance accumulates on the surface of a solid **ADSORPTION**

absorbed See **interested**

abstract, simplified, stylised, as a painting or design might be **CONVENTIONALISED**

– abstract, subtle, or complex, often excessively so **METAPHYSICAL**
– abstract or imaginary rather than actual **NOTIONAL**
– abstract sculpture **CONSTRUCTION**
– non-abstract, realistic or representational, as a painting might be **FIGURATIVE**

– treat an idea or abstraction as a real or concrete thing **REIFY**

absurd See also **ridiculous**

– absurd or apparently self-contradictory statement that is not necessarily untrue **PARADOX**
– following through an idea or principle to an absurd extreme **REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM**

absurdity, gross misrepresentation, farce or caricature **TRAVESTY**, **CHARADE**

abundance See **plenty**, **excess**

-abundant -ULENT

academic clothing, especially dark clothing worn on formal occasions at Oxford University **SUBFUSC**
– academic conference or discussion **COLLOQUIUM**

– academic retreat from everyday life, as a university is sometimes considered to be **IVORY TOWER**

– academic term, in the U.S. or Germany, typically forming half an academic year **SEMESTER**

– academic treatise or thesis, as for a higher degree **DISSERTATION**

– relating to two or more academic subjects or fields of study **INTERDISCIPLINARY**

– strips of white cloth on academic robes **GENEVA BANDS**

accelerated- **TACHY-**, **TACHY-**, **TACHEO-**

accent, vocabulary, and general form of a language used by a particular regional or social group **DIALECT**
– accent of a strong regional kind, especially Irish **BROGUE**

– accented, carrying the principal stress in a word, as a syllable might be **TONIC**

– throaty and harsh, as some accents or languages are **GUTTURAL**

– word in ancient Greek having an accent on the last syllable **OXYTONE**

accept, abide by, or reconcile oneself to a ruling, decision, or the like **COMPLY WITH**, **ACCEDE TO**, **ACQUIESCE IN**

acceptable See also **mediocre**

– acceptable, effective, or sound, as an argument, title, or passport might be **VALID**

– acceptable to one's taste or ideas **PALATABLE**

– meet the required standards of acceptability **PASS MUSTER**

– model of behaviour, standard of acceptability, or the like **NORM**

acceptance as true, belief **CREDENCE**

– acceptance of an agreement or treaty **ACCESSION**

– acceptance or approval, as of a decision or course of action **SANCTION**, **ENDORSEMENT**

accepted widely, generally believed, time-honoured, as a theory or view might be **RECEIVED**

accepting, as of misfortune or unfair treatment, passive or submissive **RESIGNED**, **ACQUIESCENT**

accident, as caused by bad luck rather than negligence **MISHAP**

– accident or occurrence causing death **FATALITY**

– tendency to make lucky discoveries by accident **SERENDIPITY**

accidental, by chance, unexpected or unplanned **ADVENTITIOUS**, **FORUITOUS**

– accidental, chance, occurring randomly **CONTINGENT**, **ALEATORY**

– accidental, unintended, or impulsive **UNPREMEDITATED**

– accidental developments, or changes of fortune **VICISSITUDES**

– accidental yet unlawful killing **MANSLAUGHTER**

accidentally, unintentionally, without meaning to **INADVERTENTLY**, **UNWITTINGLY**

accommodation – assign accommodation to military officers or troops **BILLET**, **QUARTER**, **CANTON**

accompany or escort someone, especially a young unmarried woman, for protection and propriety **CHAPERONE**

– accompany troops, ships, or land vehicles for protection **CONVOY**

– accompanying, associated with, occurring together **CONCOMITANT**

accomplishment showing great skill **TOUR DE FORCE**

account, score, or recorded reckoning, as of accidents **TALLY**

– account, typically detailing the goods or services provided **INVOICE**

– alter a document, accounts, evidence, or the like in order to deceive **FALSIFY**

– clearly described in vivid or ex-

citing detail, as an account of an accident might be **GRAPHIC**

– examine, adjust, or certify accounts or other records **AUDIT**

– settling of a bill or account **RECKONING**

accuracy or strict adherence to the truth **VERACITY**

– demanding and determined person, insisting on obedience, tidiness, accuracy, or the like **STICKLER**

accurate See also **precise**

– accurate or indisputably true statement, belief, principle, or the like **VERITY**

accusation See also **charge**

– accusation or a veiled criticism **IMPUTATION**

– accusations of a bitter, mutual kind **RECRIMINATIONS**

– acknowledgment of a telling point, argument, or accusation made against one **TOUCHÉ**

– false report or accusation, slander, slur **ASPERSION**

– reject or deny a claim or accusation **REPUDIATE**

– stop and confront a person, as with an accusation **ACCOST**

accuse, confront, or criticise **TAX**

– accuse of a crime, especially treason **IMPEACH**

– accuse of or charge with an offence or crime, especially before a court of law **INDICT**, **ARRAIGN**

– accuse or inform against **DENONCE**

accustomed to, used to **HABITUATED**, **INURED**, **ACCLIMATISED**, **ATTUNED**, **WONT**

aces – two aces, the lowest throw in playing dice **AMBSACE**

achieve or obtain, manage **COMPASS**, **ENCOMPASS**

achievement of a final stage or development, highpoint **PINNACLE**, **ZENITH**, **MERIDIAN**, **SUMMIT**
– achievement or success of a brilliant kind **ÉCLAT**

– achievement or exploit showing great skill or strength **TOUR DE FORCE**

acid See chart, page 14

– acid-alkali indicator **PHENOL-PHTHALEIN**, **LITMUS PAPER**

– acid as used for etching on a printing plate **MORDANT**

– acid-like substance, the universal solvent, that dissolves anything, believed by alchemists to be possible and discoverable **ALKAHEST**

– acid or other destructive chemical **CORROSIVE**

– able to react as both an acid and a base, as some chemicals are **AMPHOTERIC**, **AMPHIPROTIC**

– bottle for acids and other corrosive liquids CARBOY
 – chemical compound that reacts with acids to form salts BASE
 – soluble base that can neutralise an acid ALKALI

acidic or harsh, as in smell, manner, or effect ASTRINGENT

acknowledged, candidly admitted, self-confessed AVOWED

acorn – acorn's cup-like base, or other cup-shaped structure CUPULE
 – acorns and beech nuts used as pig food MAST
 – acorns and other pasturage for pigs, as in a forest PANNAGE

acrobat or entertainer who twists his limbs and body into abnormal positions CONTORTIONIST
 – acrobat or gymnast specialising in turning somersaults or cartwheels TUMBLER
 – acrobats' bar suspended from free-swinging ropes TRAPEZE

acronym – abbreviation consisting of initial letters, especially one, such as *BBC*, that unlike an acronym is pronounced as letters INITIALISM

across, from side to side, crossways TRANSVERSELY, ATHWART

across- DIA-, TRANS-

act or adventure, especially a noble or heroic one EXPLOIT

– act or behave in a specified way, conduct oneself COMPORT ONESELF

acting See also **drama**, **theatre**

– acting, especially excessively dramatic acting HISTRIONICS

– acting, provisional, being a temporary substitute for INTERIM, SURROGATE

– acting or speaking beyond the range of one's ability or expertise ULTRACREPIDARIAN

– acting profession, the stage, "boards", dramatics FOOTLIGHTS

– acting ruler during a monarch's illness, minority, or other disqualifying condition REGENT

acting-, in place of- PRO-

action aimed at resisting change or warding off likely defeat REARGUARD ACTION

– action taken to avoid likely trouble or problems EVASIVE ACTION

– behaviour or mental activity directed towards change or action, including desire, striving, and so on CONATION

– stimulation, impulse, or spur to action, drive or prompting MOTIVATION, INCENTIVE, INDUCEMENT

activate a mechanism by releasing a catch, trigger, or switch TRIP, ACTUATE

active See also **energetic**, **enthusiastic**

– active, lively, and vigorous, typ-

ACIDS	
acetic acid	found in vinegar
amino acid	basis of proteins
ascorbic acid	vitamin C
carbolic acid/phenol	used in disinfectant soap
citric acid	found in lemons and other citrus fruits
DNA/deoxyribonucleic acid	basis of chromosomes, and hence of genetic transmission
formic acid	naturally occurring in ants
hydrochloric acid/spirits of salt	found in dilute form in the digestive juices; wide industrial application
lactic acid	found in sour milk
malic acid	found in unripe apples and other fruit
nitric acid/aqua fortis	corrosive acid used in making explosives and rocket fuels
nitrohydrochloric acid/aqua regia	used for dissolving platinum and gold, and for testing metals
prussic acid/hydrocyanic acid	cyanide compound, a favourite poison of detective-story writers
RNA/ribonucleic acid	found in all living cells; essential for protein production
salicylic acid	basis of aspirin
sulphuric acid	highly dangerous and corrosive acid, with wide industrial application
tannic acid/tannin	found in tea; used in tanning and clarifying wine and beer
tartaric acid	used in baking powder
uric acid	cause, when unregulated, of gout

ically in spite of being old SPRY, SPRIGHTLY

– active, tireless, unfailingly energetic INDEFATIGABLE

– active, vigorous, and enthusiastic ANIMATED

– active in an excessive or uncontrolled way HYPERACTIVE, MANIC, HECTIC, FRENETIC

– actively promoting and committed to a moral or political cause ENGAGÉ

– inactive but still arousable, potentially active LATENT, DORMANT

– no longer active, as a volcano might be EXTINCT

– receiving or being subjected to an action rather than being active or taking the initiative PASSIVE

activity, amusement, or hobby, interesting pursuit DIVERSION, DIS-

TRACTION, AVOCATION

– activity, such as spacewalking, outside the spacecraft while away from Earth EXTRAVEHICULAR AC-

TIVITY

actor in an old-fashioned masque or mime MUMMER

– actor or actress THESPIAN

– actor or actress who knows a role and can replace the regular actor or actress in an emergency UNDERSTUDY

– actor or comedian who overacts HAM

– actor or other performer having considerable experience, veteran artiste TROUPER

– actor who conveys ideas by the use of expression and gesture rather than words MIME

– actor who has a non-speaking

role in a play or film, such as an extra or walk-on SUPERNUMERARY
 – actor's cue to speak or enter CATCHWORD
 – actor's first public appearance DEBUT
 – actor's lengthy speech when alone on stage MONOLOGUE, SOLILOQUY
 – laugh inappropriately on stage, as an actor might, or cause another actor to laugh CORPSE
 – reappearance of an actor, cast, choir, or the like, to acknowledge applause CURTAIN CALL
 – relating to an actor always cast in the same type of role TYPECAST
actress playing a young woman, especially a flirtatious lady's maid in a comedy or comic opera SOUBRETTE
actual See **real**
actually, really, in fact DE FACTO
acupuncture STYLOSTIXIS
 – burning of leaf-down on the skin as a means of therapy, sometimes used as a supplement to acupuncture MOXIBUSTION
acute or piercing, as a pain might be LANCINATING
A.D. or Christian era as referred to by non-Christians COMMON ERA, C.E.
adapt See also **change**
 – adapt, become integrated or absorbed ASSIMILATE
 – adapt, familiarise, adjust to new circumstances ORIENTATE
 – adapt or arrange a musical item for different instruments, voices, or the like TRANSCRIBE
adaptable, adjusting to changed conditions PLIABLE, VERSATILE
 – adaptable or variable, as working hours might be FLEXIBLE
add, attach, or tack on AFFIX, ANNEX
 – add or attach at the end APPEND, SUFFIX, SUBJOIN
 – add to, complete, make perfect COMPLEMENT
 – add to or aggravate an error or difficulty COMPOUND
 – quantity that is added to another ADDEND
 – quantity to which another is added AUGEND
added, supplementary, incidental rather than essential or belonging ADSCITITIOUS, ADVENTITIOUS, EXTRANEOUS, EXTRINSIC
 – added clause, amendment, or qualification to a legal document, verdict, parliamentary bill, or the like RIDER
 – added material at the end of a book, message, or the like AFTER-THOUGHT, POSTSCRIPT, APPENDIX,

ANNEXE, SUPPLEMENT, ADDENDUM
 – added or growing by a series of steps or additions CUMULATIVE
 – added or related feature that is not essential but only incidental ADJUNCT
addiction to alcohol or drugs DEPENDENCE
adding device, as used in Asia, operated by moving beads on rods ABACUS
addition bit by bit and a gradual increase, build-up ACCRETION
 – addition or amendment to a will CODICIL
 – addition or increase INCREMENT
 – addition or newly acquired possession, as in a library or other collection ACCESSION
 – addition or the total reached by it SUMMATION
additional, extra SUPPLEMENTARY, SUPERVENIENT
 – additional, supplementary, or accompanying item, as to a motor car FITMENT, ACCESSORY
 – additional charge or cost SURCHARGE
 – additional or supplementary part, typically added to something more important APPENDAGE, APPURTENANCE, PENDANT
 – additional proposition following from the proof of another proposition COROLLARY
 – additional section at the end of a novel, piece of music, or the like CODA
 – additional sum of money, such as a bonus or an increase in price PREMIUM
additional- EPI-
address See also **speech**
 – address a book or other work specifically to a person or group as a mark of respect or affection DEDICATE
 – address for postal deliveries that is different from the actual address of the person or business ACCOMMODATION ADDRESS
 – address to an imaginary or absent person or a personified thing when digressing in a formal speech APOSTROPHE
 – phrase used in the address on a letter that is to be kept at a particular post office for collection by the addressee GENERAL DELIVERY, POSTE RESTANTE
adequate See **mediocre**
 – adequate but modest income or standard of living SUFFICIENCY, COMPETENCE
adjective or adverb in grammar MODIFIER, QUALIFIER
 – adjective or descriptive term, of-

ten a scornful or disparaging one EPITHET
 – degrees of comparison of adjectives and adverbs POSITIVE, COMPARATIVE, SUPERLATIVE
 – referring or relating to an adjective typically directly in front of the noun, as in *the lonely child*, rather than separated from it by a verb ATTRIBUTIVE
 – referring or relating to an adjective that is separated from the noun by a linking verb, as in *The child is lonely* PREDICATIVE
 – word such as *the*, *six*, or *your*, that limits a noun and is placed before any descriptive adjectives DETERMINER
adjust See also **change**, **correct**, **improve**
 – adjust, adapt, or tailor, as to improve or harmonise MODIFY, REGULATE
 – adjust, alter, or tinker with, as to improve the relationship between corresponding parts of a machine ALIGN
 – adjust, familiarise, adapt to new circumstances ORIENTATE
 – adjust and correct, set right RECTIFY, REMEDY, REDRESS
 – adjust organ pipes or a wind instrument to perfect the tone and pitch VOICE
 – adjust to a new environment, harmonise ASSIMILATE
admiration See also **praise**
 – admiration, great regard, high esteem APPROBATION, VENERATION
 – deserving admiration, admirable COMMENDABLE, LAUDABLE, ESTIMABLE
 – excessive admiration, doting devotion, hero-worship IDOLATRY
admire greatly, hold in very high esteem REVERE, IDOLISE
admired or beloved person, focus of attention CYNOSURE
admirers – group of ardent admirers CLAUQUE
admission of guilt, acknowledgment of wrongdoing or sin PECCAVI, MEA CULPA
 – admission qualifications, exams, or ceremony for a university or college MATRICULATION
 – admission ritual or ceremony INITIATION
admit, confess, acknowledge AVOW, CONCEDE
 – admit defeat in an election CONCEDE
 – admitting of or permitting something, such as an interpretation SUSCEPTIBLE
adolescence in its early stages, in which adult reproductive charac-

teristics develop PUBERTY

adorn See **decorate, ornament**

adult insect IMAGO

adultery or other sexual unfaithfulness INFIDELITY

– adulterous, referring or relating to a spouse's sexual relationship outside marriage EXTRAMARITAL

– man who tolerates his wife's adultery WITOL

– man whose wife has committed adultery CUCKOLD

– person cited in a divorce case as having committed adultery with the partner being sued CO-RESPONDENT

– tacit encouragement of a wrongful act, such as the adultery of one's spouse CONNIVANCE

advance arrival or announcer, fore-runner, herald PREDECESSOR, PRECURSOR, HARBINGER

– advance explorer, reconnoitrer, scout OUTRIDER

– advance or intrusion into the time or territory of another INROAD, ENCROACHMENT, INCURSION, TRESPASS, INFRINGEMENT

– advance payment, as in a poker game or financial venture ANTE

– advance to a higher level or a more important role GRADUATE

– advancing by degrees or stages, as from one tone or colour to the next GRADATION

– sudden and dramatic advance or change QUANTUM LEAP, QUANTUM JUMP

advanced or clever beyond his years as a sophisticated child seems to be PRECOCIOUS

advantage, benefit, blessing BOON

– advantage of a temporary or uncertain kind TOEHOLD

– anything that can be turned to one's profit or advantage GRIST

– be of help or advantage AVAIL

– exploited person, person who is taken advantage of, dupe STOOGES, PATSY, CAT'S PAW

– have a specified effect, as to one's credit or advantage REDOUND

– person who exploits or takes advantage of another's generosity PARASITE, LEECH

– person who takes advantage of an opportunity, often unscrupulously OPPORTUNIST

– take advantage of an opportunity, turn something to advantage UTILISE, CAPITALISE ON

– take advantage of, especially selfishly and unjustly EXPLOIT

advantageous, favourable, healthy BENEFICIAL, BENIGN, BENIGNANT

adventure, deed, or feat, especially a

noble or heroic one EXPLOIT

– adventure story CONTE

– mischievous adventure, spree, prank ESCAPE, CAPER

adventurer, rogue PICARO, PICARON

adventurous, flamboyant, daredevil, swaggering SWASHBUCKLING

adventurous spirit See **energy**

adverb or adjective in grammar MODIFIER, QUALIFIER

– degrees of comparison of adjectives and adverbs POSITIVE, COMPARATIVE, SUPERLATIVE

advertise a product by using one's name to recommend it ENDORSE

advertisement, notice, or leaflet distributed widely, handout HANDBILL, CIRCULAR, FLIER

– person who writes the text of advertisements COPYWRITER

– simple catchphrase, motto, or the like used repeatedly, as in advertisements SLOGAN

– simple, catchy tune or rhyme as used in advertisements JINGLE

– unauthorised sticking up of advertisements or other posters in public places FLYPOSTING

advertising and its philosophy MADISON AVENUE

– advertising and publicity language that is misleading or bewildering HOOPLA

– advertising display board HOARDING, BILLBOARD

– advertising or publicity campaign, or advertising in general PROMOTION

– advertising or publicity that is brash and sensational BALLYHOO, RAZZLE-DAZZLE, RAZZMATAZZ

– advertising or selling of an aggressive kind HARD SELL

– advertising pillar on a pavement MORRIS COLUMN

– advertising technique in film and television using flashed images, too quick to be consciously registered, supposedly to influence the viewer SUBLIMINAL ADVERTISING

advice, guidance COUNSEL

– advice or warning MONITION

– observer, as at a card game, offering uninvited comments or advice KIBITZER

– remedial, improving, beneficial, as advice might be SALUTARY

– seeking of or meeting for advice, as from a doctor or lawyer CONSULTATION

advisable, prudent JUDICIOUS, EXPEDIENT

adviser, assistant, right-hand man AIDE

– adviser or wise teacher MENTOR

– adviser to an editor or publisher on the suitability for publication of

an academic article REFEREE

– advisers, unofficial yet influential, to a government or business leader KITCHEN CABINET

advocate See **barrister**

aerial, as for a radio ANTENNA

– aerial in the form of a straight metal rod, supported in the middle DIPOLE

– aerial manoeuvres in aerobics SNAP ROLL, BARREL ROLL, WING-OVER, CHANDELLE

– directional aerial with several parallel elements, as used in radio astronomy and television reception YAGI

aeroplane See **aircraft**

aerosol – liquid or gas for dispersing substances, as in an aerosol DISPERSANT, PROPELLANT

affair, sexual relationship LIAISON

– referring or relating to a spouse's sexual relationship outside marriage EXTRAMARITAL, ADULTEROUS

affect See also **influence**

– have a favourable or unfavourable result or effect REDOUND

– affect, influence, serve as evidence MILITATE

affected See also **pompous, highfalutin, artificial**

– affected, over-dainty, over-refined, as in movement or behaviour MINCING, NIMINY-PIMINY

– affected, over-elegant, as manner or speech PRECIOUS, GENTEEL, LA-DI-DA

– affected, over-refined, over-elaborate, as with ideas or styles RECHERCHÉ

– affected readily or moved easily SUSCEPTIBLE

– affectedly pretty or fashionable CHICHI

-affected, -suffering -OTIC

affecting or touching POIGNANT, PATHETIC

affection See **liking**

– antagonise, alienate, lose the affection of ESTRANGE

afflicted, as by a disease or disaster STRICKEN

afraid See **frightened**

-afraid -PHOBE, -PHOBIA, -PHOBIC

Africa – bard or oral historian in a West African community GRIOT

– boss or employer in East Africa, or a respectful term of address BWANA

– charm, amulet, or fetish in West Africa, or its supposed supernatural powers JUJU

– brightly coloured cloth strip used as a garment in Africa KANGA, KENTE, KIKOI

– independence or freedom in