The NEW OXFORD Dictionary of ENGLISH

新牛津英语词典

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New Oxford New English

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EDITED BY
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SHANGHAI FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION PRESS

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"新牛津","新英语"

——《新牛津英语词典》代序

  手捧 1998 年出版的《新牛津英语词典》(The New Oxford Dictionary of English),首先吸引我的不是护封上罗列的各种数据,而是墨绿背景前跃出的一小块鹅黄,菱形框里总结了这部词典的本质特征,即"新牛津"(New Oxford)和"新英语"(New English),本文就试从这"两新"说起。

  查阅英语词典的人都知道,牛津是老牌中的王牌,一百多年以来一直被视作英语词语的"终极权威"(the last word)。自从 1928 年第一版《牛津英语词典》出齐问世以来,牛津系统的各种词典,包括简编(Shorter)、简明(Concise)、袖珍(Pocket),无不给人一种老成持重的传统感:义项的排列,正如最初的书名所述,以历史沿革为根据(on historical principles),由远及近,往往是从中古英语的原义,跨越七八百年,始及于今;多数例证都是引自名著、学刊等的书证,读者可以从中找到乔叟的名言,也可了解莎士比亚率先创用了哪些词语;就权威性而言,固然欲钦盛哉,难有出其右者,但从例证鲜活的现实致用性衡量,则不足为训;英国以外的英语品类虽也有所顾及,但所占份量轻薄,而对各种"非主流"的用法往往是不屑一顾的。旧牛津多以废义或古义打头,而确有旺盛生命力的今义却被掩藏在大篇释文中,苦煞查阅人。新版牛津却是从当代英语的实际出发,对意群作了爬核和整理,义项大大精简,实用性显然大增,更便利了查阅;与此同时,新版牛津的释文力求精炼,措辞力求简易。试以 hub 一条为例,若将新版牛津与类似规模的新版《钱伯斯词典》作一比较,前者主次两义相加一共 33 个英文词,其中无一生僻,而后者的释文长达 63 词,且多 nave, quoits 之类的难词。即使对科技术语,新版牛津的编者宁可以督者为对象撰写明晰释文,最后加上拉丁学名、化学分子式等信息,以为识者所用。第三,从总的语言哲学指导思想看,新版牛津尊奉的是 whatever is is,是修正传统(revisionist),而不再强调语法学家、教书先生们提倡的用法,当然更不再是 King's English 或 Queen's English 了。读者不妨翻到 friend 条,看看此词用作动词时新版牛津所提供的黑人英语例证:the woman got married and you still used to friend with she。应当说,这种真实英语的例证在当年的旧版牛津是很难找到的。新版牛津的不少"用法须知"(usage notes)为虽属"另类"却是真实的英语大开绿灯,诸如 Caribbean 和 harass 的重音偏移;纵是"独一无二"仍可说"very unique";"due to"只能引起表语是迂腐之见,实际使用时与 because of 无别,等等。无怪乎,《每日电讯报》指责新版牛津是老版牛津的"智力退化型"(dumbed down)变种;《卫报》在论及新版牛津对分裂不定式取容忍态度时,更是引用某权威的危言说论:"要是我们继续这么干,我们将创造出一个特种阶层,这些人连求职信都不会写,因而将找不到职业。"* 在尊奉传统和修正传统的两派之间,争议依然存在,有人还是推崇新版《钱伯斯词典》。

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* 见 www. worldwidewords.org。

说到"新英语",首先必须一提的自然就是新版牛津收录的约 2000 条新词和新义,而这些新词和新义据称都是从字数逾亿的英国国家语库(the British National Corpus)以及牛津阅读项目组(the Oxford Reading Programme)逾四千万字的引语文档中掇精而得的。因此,如 Gulf War syndrome, human shield, netiquette, yuppie flu, no-brainer, zine 等二十世纪九十年代出现的新词,在新版中有很高的查得率。其次,新版牛津对英国以外的英语品类采取了比以往容忍又开放得多的态度,按编者们的说法,新版是部真正意义上的国际词典,把英语作为一种全球通用的语言来描述。据统计,从英国以外不同品类的英语(主要是北美、澳新、印度、加勒比地区等)中撷取的词目共 11,000 余条,占全书的 1/35 强。第三,所谓"新英语"在相当程度上表现为新科技、新工艺、新产品、新学科等的出现和大批新的专有名词的频用。有鉴于此,以前编词典时那种把"词"(words)和"事实"(facts)截然分开,只收语词,罔顾百科的做法,显然已经过时。新版牛津的编者们因而宣称:"像'莎士比亚'和'英格兰'之类的条目,与'戏剧'或'语言'一类实无不同,都应成为大词典收录的内容。"于是,科技术语和百科类条目两者相加,据称约有 64,000 条,占全部词目的 1/6 左右。像美国"性感"歌星麦当娜和吸毒成瘾的阿根廷球星马拉多纳,既非爵妇或爵士,品行亦颇有争议,收录这样的人名在以前是难以想像的;不少中国地名(包括枣庄这样的中等城市)在词典中都以旧式拼法和拼音新法相并列,也是比较周到的做法。但是编者严重的政治偏见在"台湾"、"西藏"、"天安门"等条目中也是清晰可见的,对这些条目的释文不作技术处理,此书自然不可能在大陆出版。(注:词典中的该类条目以及一些词法、句法错误已由**本社按我国的出版政策认真审校修订。——外教社**)第四,所谓"新英语"也反映在新版词典中 500 条左右用法须知的文字中,因为这类文字中有相当一部分涉及用语的价值观。是沿袭传统还是尊重今人的价值判断,新版牛津在这个问题上倾向于后者,因而指出 -ess 的女性化后缀有轻慢色彩,不可滥用;Christian name 也要慎用,盖因我们大家今天都生活在多元文化的社会中;要特别留意对少数族裔的称呼问题,应当用 Inuit 代替 Eskimo,正如应用 black 代替 Negro,用 Asian 代替 Oriental 一样。但是新版牛津并没有像现时鼓吹"政治正确"的那班人般走火入魔。cripple 不宜多用,然而 disabled 应仍是表示残疾的最常见用语,英美皆然,远未被"政治正确"的异想天开的一类词,如 differently abled 或 physically challenged 等所取代。一方面,新版牛津从女权主义立场收入了 herstory 等新词,并指出 humankind 正逐步取代 mankind 的事实;另一方面又实事求是地指出,虽有"大男子主义"色彩,man-made 依然频用,而把 man 用作动词以及 manpower 这样的词至今尚无合适的词语可以替代。既是如实写真,又不走极端——这就是新版牛津编者对语词所承载的价值观的态度。

　　三十位编者,加上六十位分布全球各地的顾问,花了六年时间编成的《新牛津英语词典》在效率和速度方面,自然也有不少值得借鉴的地方;至于新版所采用的开放型版式,多分段,尽量少用括弧,以小黑方格、小黑三角、小黑圆点为主要分隔标志,使词典内容醒目而十分便于查阅,可以说是达到了 user-friendly 的要求。只是这些优点不涉词典内质,恕不在此展开详述了。

<div align="right">陆谷孙</div>

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Preface

The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* is a completely new dictionary, written on new principles. It builds on the excellence of the lexico-graphical traditions of scholarship and analysis of evidence as set down by the *Oxford English Dictionary* over a century ago, but it is also very much a new departure. The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* is a dictionary of current English and it is informed by currently available evidence and current thinking about language and cognition. It is an inventory of the words and meanings of present-day English, both those in actual use and those found in the literature of the past. The compilers have gone to the heart of the traditional practices of dictionary making and reappraised the principles on which lexicography is based. In particular, the focus has been on a different approach to an understanding of 'meaning' and how this relates to the structure, organization, and selection of material for the dictionary.

Linguists, cognitive scientists, and others have been developing new techniques for analysing usage and meaning, and the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* has taken full advantage of these developments. Foremost among them is an emphasis on identifying what is 'central and typical', as distinct from the time-honoured search for 'necessary conditions' of meaning (i.e. a statement of the conditions that would enable someone to pick out all and only the cases of the term being defined). Past attempts to cover the meaning of all possible uses of a word have tended to lead to a blurred, unfocused result, in which the core of the meaning is obscured by many minor uses. In the *New Oxford Dictionary of English*, meanings are linked to central norms of usage as observed in the language. The result is fewer meanings, with sharper, crisper definitions.

The style of definition adopted for the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* aims in part to account for the dynamism, imaginativeness, and flexibility of ordinary usage. The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* records and explains all normal meanings and uses of all well-attested words, but also illustrates transferred, figurative, and derivative meanings, in so far as these are conventional within the language.

The layout and organization of each entry in the dictionary reflect this new approach to meaning. Each entry has at least one core meaning, to which a number of subsenses, logically connected to it, may be attached. The text design is open and accessible, making it easy to find the core meanings and so to navigate the entry as a whole.

At the heart of the dictionary lies the **evidence**. This evidence forms the basis for everything which we, as lexicographers, are able to say about the language and the words within it. In particular, the large body of texts collected together on line as the British National Corpus gives, with its 100 million words, a selection of real, modern, and everyday language, equivalent to an ordinary person's reading over ten years or more. Using computational tools to analyse the data in the British National Corpus and other corpora, the editors have been able to look at the behaviour of each word in detail in its natural contexts, and so to build up a picture for every word in the dictionary.

Corpus analysis has been complemented by analysis of other types of evidence: the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* makes extensive use of the citation database of the Oxford Reading Programme, a collection of citations (currently standing at over 40 million words and growing at a rate of about 4.5 million words a year) taken from a variety of sources from all the English-speaking countries of the world. In addition, a specially commissioned reading programme has targeted previously neglected specialist fields as diverse as computing, complementary medicine, antique collecting, and winter sports. Other research includes a detailed and comprehensive survey of plants and animals throughout the world, resulting in the inclusion of hundreds of entries not in any other one-volume dictionary.

The general approach to defining in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* has particular application for specialist vocabulary. Here, in the context of dealing with highly technical information which may be unfamiliar to the non-specialist reader, the focus on clarity of expression is of great importance. Avoidance of over-technical terminology and an emphasis on explaining and describing as well as defining are balanced by the need to maintain a high level of technical information and accuracy. In many cases, additional technical information is presented separately in an easily recognizable alternative format.

The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* views the language from the perspective that English is a world language. A network of consultants throughout the English-speaking world has enabled us to ensure excellent coverage of world English, from Canada and the US to the Caribbean, India, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. We have been indebted to the opportunities provided for communication by the Internet; lively discussions by e-mail across the oceans have formed an everyday part of the dictionary-making process.
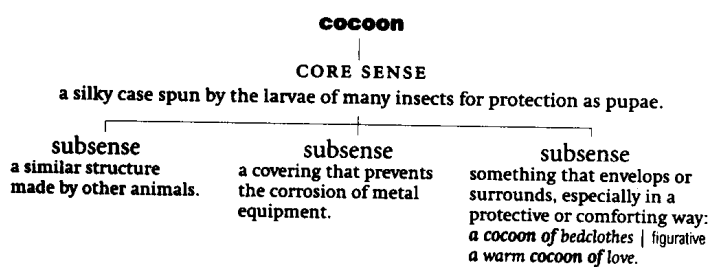
Introduction

The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* has been compiled according to principles which are quite different from those of traditional dictionaries. New types of evidence are now available in sufficient quantity to allow lexicographers to construct a picture of the language that is more accurate than has been possible before. The approach to structuring and organizing within individual dictionary entries has been rethought, as has the approach to the selection and presentation of information in every aspect of the dictionary: definitions, choice of examples, grammar, word histories, and every other category. New approaches have been adopted in response to a reappraisal of the workings of language in general and its relationship to the presentation of information in a dictionary in particular. The aim of this introduction is to give the reader background information for using this dictionary and, in particular, to explain some of the thinking behind these new approaches.

Structure: Core Sense and Subsense

The first part of speech is the primary one for that word: thus, for **bag** and **balloon** the senses of the noun are given before those for the verb, while for **babble** and **bake** the senses of the verb are given before those of the noun.

cocoon

|
CORE SENSE
a silky case spun by the larvae of many insects for protection as pupae.

subsense	subsense	subsense
a similar structure made by other animals.	a covering that prevents the corrosion of metal equipment.	something that envelops or surrounds, especially in a protective or comforting way: *a cocoon of bedclothes* | figurative *a warm cocoon of love.*

Within each part of speech the first definition given is the **core sense**. The general principle on which the senses in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* are organized is that each word has at least one core meaning, to which a number of subsenses may be attached. If there is more than one core sense (see below), this is introduced by a bold sense number. Core meanings represent typical, central uses of the word in question in modern standard English, as established by research on and analysis of the British National Corpus and other corpora and citation databases. The core meaning is the one that represents the most literal sense that the word has in ordinary modern usage. This is not necessarily the same as the oldest meaning, because word meanings change over time. Nor is it necessarily the most frequent meaning, because figurative senses are sometimes the most frequent. It is the meaning accepted by native speakers as the one that is most established as literal and central.

The core sense also acts as a gateway to other, related subsenses. These subsenses are grouped under the core sense, each one being introduced by a solid square symbol.

cocoon

CORE SENSE	a silky case spun by the larvae of many insects for protection as pupae.
subsense	■ a similar structure made by other animals. ■ a covering that prevents the corrosion of metal equipment. ■ something that envelops or surrounds, especially in a protective or comforting way: *a cocoon of bedclothes* | figurative *a warm cocoon of love.*

There is a logical relationship between each subsense and the core sense under which it appears. The organization of senses according to this logical relationship is designed to help the user, not only in being able to navigate the entry more easily and find relevant senses more readily, but also in building up an understanding of how senses in the language relate to one another and how the language is constructed on this model. The main types of relationship of core sense to subsense are as follows:

(a) figurative extension of the core sense, e.g.

backbone

CORE SENSE	the series of vertebrae in a person or animal, extending from the skull to the pelvis; the spine.
subsense	■ figurative the chief support of a system or organization; the mainstay: *these firms are the backbone of our industrial sector.*
subsense	■ [mass noun] figurative strength of character: *he has enough backbone to see us through this difficulty.*

bankrupt

CORE SENSE	(of a person or organization) declared in law unable to pay their debts.
subsense	■ figurative completely lacking in a particular good quality or value: *their cause is morally bankrupt.*

(b) specialized case of the core sense, e.g.

ball

CORE SENSE	a single throw, kick, or other movement of the ball in the course of a game, in particular:
subsense	■ Cricket a delivery of the ball by the bowler to the batsman.
subsense	■ Baseball a pitch delivered outside the strike zone which the batter does not attempt to hit.

demand

CORE SENSE	an insistent and peremptory request, made as of right.
subsense	■ [mass noun] Economics the desire of purchasers, consumers, clients, employers, etc. for a particular commodity, service, or other item: *a recent slump in demand.*

(c) other extension or shift in meaning, retaining one or more elements of the core sense, e.g.

bamboo

CORE SENSE   [mass noun] a giant woody grass which grows chiefly in the tropics, where it is widely cultivated.

subsense   ■ the hollow jointed stem of this plant, used as a cane or to make furniture and implements.

management

CORE SENSE   [mass noun] the process of dealing with or controlling things or people.

subsense   ■ [treated as sing. or pl.] the people in charge of running a company or organization, regarded collectively: *management were extremely cooperative.*

mandarin

CORE SENSE   an official in any of the nine top grades of the former imperial Chinese civil service.

subsense   ■ a powerful official or senior bureaucrat, especially one perceived as reactionary and secretive: *a civil service mandarin.*

Many entries have just one core sense. However some entries are more complex and have different strands of meaning, each constituting a core sense. In this case, each core sense is introduced by a bold sense number, and each potentially has its own block of subsenses relating to it.

belt

CORE SENSE   **1** a strip of leather or other material worn round the waist or across the chest, especially in order to support or hold in clothes or to carry weapons.

subsenses   ■ short for **SEAT BELT**. ■ a belt worn as a sign of rank or achievement: *he was awarded the victor's belt.* ■ a belt of a specified colour, marking the attainment of a particular level in judo, karate, or similar sports: [as modifier] *brown-belt level.* ■ a person who has reached such a level: *Shaun became a brown belt in judo.* ■ (**the belt**) the punishment of being struck with a belt.

CORE SENSE   **2** a strip of material used in various technical applications, in particular:

subsenses   ■ a continuous band of material used in machinery for transferring motion from one wheel to another. ■ a conveyor belt. ■ a flexible strip carrying machine-gun cartridges.

CORE SENSE   **3** a strip or encircling band of something having a specified nature or composition that is different from its surroundings: *the asteroid belt | a belt of trees.*

CORE SENSE   **4** informal a heavy blow: *she ran in to administer a good belt with her stick.*

Specialist Vocabulary

One of the most important uses of a dictionary is to provide explanations of terms in specialized fields which are unfamiliar to a general reader. Yet in many traditional dictionaries the definitions have been written by specialists as if for other specialists, and as a result the definitions are often opaque and difficult for the general reader to understand.

One of the primary aims of the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* has been to break down the barriers to understanding specialist vocabulary. The challenge has been, on the one hand, to give information which is comprehensible, relevant, and readable, suitable for the general reader, while on the other hand maintaining the high level of technical information and accuracy suitable for the more specialist reader.

This has been achieved in some cases, notably entries for plants and animals and chemical substances, by separating out technical information from the rest of the definition:

balloonfish

DEFINITION   a tropical porcupine fish which lives in shallow water and can inflate itself when threatened.

technical information   ● *Diodon holocanthus*, family Diodontidae.

benzopyrene

DEFINITION   [mass noun] Chemistry a compound which is the major carcinogen present in cigarette smoke, and also occurs in coal tar.

technical information   ● A polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon; chem. formula: $C_{20}H_{12}$.

In other cases, it is achieved by giving additional explanatory information within the definition itself:

curling

DEFINITION   [mass noun] a game played on ice, especially in Scotland and Canada, in which large round flat stones are slid across the surface towards a mark. Members of a team use brooms to sweep the surface of the ice in the path of the stone to control its speed and direction.

additional information

alchemy

DEFINITION   [mass noun] the medieval forerunner of chemistry, based on the supposed transformation of matter. It was concerned particularly with attempts to convert base metals into gold or find a universal elixir.

additional information

subsense   ■ figurative a process by which paradoxical results are achieved or incompatible elements combined with no obvious rational explanation: *his conducting managed by some alchemy to give a sense of fire and ice.*

As elsewhere, the purpose is to give information which is relevant and interesting, aiming not just to define the word but also to describe and explain its context in the real world. Additional information of this type, where it is substantial, is given in the form of separate boxed features:

earth

CORE SENSE   (also **Earth**) the planet on which we live; the world: *the diversity of life on earth.*

additional boxed information

> The earth is the third planet from the sun in the solar system, orbiting between Venus and Mars at an average distance of 149.6 million km from the sun, and has one natural satellite, the moon. It has an equatorial diameter of 12,756 km, an average density 5.5 times that of water, and is believed to have formed about 4,600 million years ago. The earth, which is three-quarters covered by oceans and has a dense atmosphere of nitrogen and oxygen, is the only planet known to support life.

Eocene

CORE SENSE   Geology of, relating to, or denoting the second epoch of the Tertiary period, between the Palaeocene and Oligocene epochs.

subsense   ■ [as noun **the Eocene**] the Eocene epoch or the system of rocks deposited during it.

additional boxed information

> The Eocene epoch lasted from 56.5 to 35.4 million years ago. It was a time of rising temperatures, and there was an abundance of mammals, including the first horses, bats, and whales.

An especially important feature of the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* is the coverage of animals and plants. In-depth research and a thorough review have been carried out for animals and plants throughout the world and, as a result, a large number of entries have been included which have never before been included in general dictionaries. The style and presentation of these entries follow the general principles for specialist vocabulary in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English*: the entries not only give the technical information, but also describe, in everyday English, the appearance and other characteristics (of behaviour, medicinal or culinary use, mythological significance, reason for the name, etc.) and the typical habitat and *distribution*:

mesosaur

CORE SENSE	an extinct small aquatic reptile of the early Permian period, with an elongated body, flattened tail, and a long narrow snout with numerous needle-like teeth.
technical information	● Genus *Mesosaurus*, order Mesosauria, subclass Anapsida.

kowari

CORE SENSE	a small carnivorous marsupial with a pointed snout, large eyes, and a black bushy tip to the tail, found in central Australia.
technical information	● *Dasycercus byrnei*, family Dasyuridae.

hiba

CORE SENSE	a Japanese conifer with evergreen scale-like leaves which form flattened sprays of foliage, widely planted as an ornamental and yielding durable timber.
technical information	● *Thujopsis dolabrata*, family Cupressaceae.

Encyclopedic Material

Some British dictionaries do not include entries for the names of people and places and other proper names. The argument for this is based on a distinction between 'words' and 'facts', by which dictionaries are about 'words' while encyclopedias and other reference works are about 'facts'. The distinction is an interesting theoretical one but in practice there is a considerable overlap: names such as *Shakespeare* and *England* are as much part of the language as words such as *drama* or *language*, and belong in a large dictionary.

The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* includes all those terms forming part of the enduring common knowledge of English speakers, regardless of whether they are classified as 'words' or 'names'. The information given is the kind of information that people are likely to need from a dictionary, however that information may be traditionally classified. Both the style of definitions in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* and the inclusion of additional material in separate blocks reflect this approach.

The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* includes more than 4,500 place-name entries, 4,000 biographical entries, and just under 3,000 other proper names. The entries are designed to provide not just the basic facts (such as birth and death dates, full name, and nationality), but also a brief context giving information about, for example, a person's life and why he or she is important.

For a few really important encyclopedic entries—for example, countries—a fuller treatment is given and additional information is given in a separate boxed note.

Grammar

In recent years grammar has begun to enjoy greater prominence than in previous decades. It is once again being taught explicitly in state schools throughout Britain and elsewhere. In addition there is a recognition that different meanings of a word are closely associated with different lexical and syntactic patterns. The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* records and exemplifies the most important of these patterns at the relevant senses of each word, thus giving guidance on language use as well as word meaning.

For example, with the word **bomb**, it is possible to distinguish the main senses of the verb simply on the basis of the grammar: whether the verb takes a direct object, no direct object, or no direct object plus an obligatory adverbial:

CORE SENSE	attack *(a place or object)* with a bomb or bombs: they bombed *the city* at dawn.
grammar	[with obj.]

(the asterisks match the direct object in the example with the bracketed item in the definition)

CORE SENSE	informal (of a film, play, or other event) fail badly: *it just became another big-budget film that bombed.*
grammar	[no obj.]
CORE SENSE	Brit. informal move or go very quickly: *we were bombing *down the motorway* at breakneck speed.*
grammar	[no obj., with adverbial of direction]

(asterisks show adverbial in example)

This has particular relevance for a dictionary such as the *New Oxford Dictionary of English*, where the aim is to present information in such a way that it helps to explain the structure of the language itself, not just the meanings of individual senses. For this reason, special attention has been paid to the grammar of each word, and grammatical structures are given explicitly.

Where possible, the syntactic behaviour of a word is presented directly: for example, if a verb is normally found in a particular sense followed by a certain preposition, this is indicated before the definition, in bold:

build

... **(build on)** use as a basis for further progress or development: *Britain should build on the talents of its workforce.*

In other cases, collocations which are typical of the word in use, though not obligatory, are shown highlighted within the example sentence:

ball game

... a situation of a particular type, especially one that is completely different from the previous one: *making the film was a whole new ball game for her.*

end

... **(end up)** eventually reach or come to a specified place, state, or course of action: *I ended up in Eritrea | you could end up with a higher income.*

Great efforts have been made to use a minimum of specialist terminology. Nevertheless, a small number of terms are essential in explaining the grammar of a word. The less familiar terms are explained below. All terms are, of course, defined and explained under their own entries in the dictionary.

Terms relating to nouns

[mass noun]: used to mark those nouns (and senses of nouns) which are not ordinarily used in the plural and are not used in the singular with the indefinite article 'a' (it is normal to talk about 'bacon', for example, but not 'a bacon' or 'three bacons'), e.g.

bacon

[mass noun] cured meat from the back or sides of a pig.

badminton

[mass noun] a game with rackets in which a shuttlecock is played back and forth across a net.

banking

[mass noun] the business conducted or services offered by a bank.

Occasionally, a mass noun may be used in the plural, with the sense 'different types of X' or 'portions of X', as in *the panel tasted a range of bacons*. Such uses are recorded in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* only when they are particularly important.

[count noun]: used to mark those nouns (and senses of nouns) which can take a plural and can be used with 'a', where this is in contrast with an already stated mass noun. By default, in this dictionary all nouns are to be regarded as count nouns unless stated otherwise.

ballet

CORE SENSE   [mass noun] an artistic dance form performed to music, using precise and highly formalized set steps and gestures.

subsense   ■ [count noun] a creative work of this form or the music written for it.

brokerage

CORE SENSE   [mass noun] the business or service of acting as a broker.

subsense   ■ [count noun] a company that buys or sells goods or assets for clients.

[as modifier]: used to mark a noun which can be placed before another noun in order to modify its meaning, e.g.

boom

[often as modifier] a movable arm over a television or film set, carrying a microphone or camera: *a boom mike.*

bedside

the space beside a bed (used especially with reference to an invalid's bed): *he was summoned to the bedside of a dying man* | [as modifier] *a bedside lamp.*

[treated as sing.]: used to mark a noun which is plural in form but is used with a singular verb, e.g. **mumps** in *mumps is one of the major childhood diseases* or **genetics** in *genetics has played a major role in this work.*

[treated as sing. or pl.]: used to mark a noun which can be used with either a singular or a plural verb without any change in meaning or in the form of the headword (often called *collective nouns,* because they typically denote groups of people considered collectively), e.g. *the government are committed to this policy* or *the government is trying to gag its critics.*

[in sing.]: used to mark a noun which is used as a count noun but is never or rarely found in the plural, e.g. **ear** in *an ear for rhythm and melody.*

Terms relating to verbs

[with obj.]: used to mark a verb which takes a direct object, i.e. is transitive (the type of direct object often being shown in brackets in the definition), e.g.

belabour

[with obj.] argue or elaborate (a subject) in excessive detail: *there is no need to belabour the point.*

[no obj.]: used to mark a verb which takes no direct object, i.e. is intransitive, e.g.

bristle

[no obj.] (of hair or fur) stand upright away from the skin, typically as a sign of anger or fear.

[with adverbial]: used to mark a verb which takes an obligatory adverbial, typically a prepositional phrase, without which the sentence in which the verb occurs would sound unnatural or odd, e.g.

barge

[no obj., with adverbial of direction] move forcefully or roughly: *we can't just barge into a private garden.*

Terms relating to adjectives

[attrib.]: used to mark an adjective which is normally used attributively, i.e. comes before the noun which it modifies, e.g. **certain** in *a certain man* (not *the man is certain,* which has a very different

meaning). Note that attributive use is standard for many adjectives, especially in specialist fields: the [attrib.] label is used only to mark those cases in which predicative use would be highly unusual.

[predic.]: used to mark an adjective which is normally used predicatively, i.e. comes after the verb, e.g. **ajar** in *the door was ajar* (not *the ajar door*).

[postpositive]: used to mark an adjective which is used postpositively, i.e. typically comes immediately after the noun which it modifies (such uses are unusual in English and generally arise because the adjective has been adopted from a language where postpositive use is standard), e.g. **galore** in *there were prizes galore.*

Terms relating to adverbs

[sentence adverb]: used to mark an adverb which stands outside a sentence or clause, providing commentary on it as a whole or showing the speaker's or writer's attitude to what is being said, rather than the manner in which something was done. Sentence adverbs most frequently express the speaker's or writer's point of view, although they may also be used to set a context by stating a field of reference, e.g.

certainly

[sentence adverb] used to convey the speaker's belief that what is said is true: *the prestigious address certainly adds to the firm's appeal.*

[as submodifier]: used to mark an adverb which is used to modify an adjective or another adverb, e.g.

comparatively

[as submodifier] to a moderate degree as compared to something else; relatively: *inflation was comparatively low.*

Evidence and Illustrative Examples

The information presented in the dictionary about individual words is based on close analysis of how words behave in real, natural language. Behind every dictionary entry are examples of the word in use—often hundreds and thousands of them—which have been analysed to give information about typical usage, about distribution (whether typically British or typically US, for example), about register (whether informal or derogatory, for example), about currency (whether archaic or dated, for example), and about subject field (whether used only in Medicine or Finance, for example).

1. Corpus

Extensive use has been made of the British National Corpus. This is a carefully balanced selection of 100 million words of written and spoken English text (equivalent to one person's reading over ten or twenty years) in machine-readable form, available for computational analysis. This resource means that, for the first time, lexicographers are in a position to see how words normally behave. By using concordancing techniques, each word can be viewed almost instantaneously in the immediate contexts in which it is used. (See Figure 1.)

    Concordances show at a glance that some combinations of words (called 'collocations') occur together much more often than others. For example, in the concordance on page xiii, 'end in', 'end the', and 'end up' all occur quite often. But are any of these combinations important enough to be given special treatment in the dictionary?

    Recent research has focused on identifying combinations that are not merely frequent but also statistically significant. In the *British*

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EngRel  ts , no future history of the English Reformation will end in 1559 . Elizabeth 's reign is now seen to be of
BrFesA  2> <p_7> The first date of her world tour , which will end in a gala evening at The Cathedral of St Margaret
LastEn  alking of your death ? You told me once that you would end in a tomb , alive , you thought it would be in Bry
DgArts  till in power . Some 53 per cent of American marriages end in divorce , usually to the detriment of the women
GcHome  wanted to build a third . The feeder roads for it now  end in empty air . " That was really the only project
Thirty  HIL : </spkr> <p_120> I think it 's a cop-out . It 'll end in tears . </sp> <sp> <spkr> HARRY : </spkr> <p_12
LaWldA  ance or Germany . .PP He forecast : " This Treaty will end in tears it is better that it ends in tears now th
Viking  sibility that she might be here , that her quest could end in the next hour or so and she would be spared the
krw101  y 11 to 33 in order to make it more broad-based and to end intra-party squabbles . .PP On Jan/NP. 7 , Murli M
UnPass  Jenny nodded . " Their final clash was always going to end in tragedy . I didn't want you to be caught in the
WheelS  my knife and pill-bottles in the tent in case I should end my life during my night 's sleep . <p_42> The firs
WAAFWr  lmost together . <p_158> It was a disenchanting way to end my service . I went into a small room and handed m
TourLf  ey . Fast and frequent trains run daily from Easter to end of September , weekends March and October . </DL>
bbcBas  instance , BBCBASIC ( Z80 ) does not have a " clear to end of screen " command . Some computers will perform
HansrC  jective No. 2 of " Community Support Frameworks " will end on 31 December 1991 . Discussions are currently pr
krw204  5 ; and the two rounds of presidential elections would end on Aug. 23 . No official reason was given for the
Factry  ing going on down there , and I was sure it would only end one way , but I couldn't move . I was stuck there
krw009  epartment announced on Sept/NP. 18 that it proposed to end or reduce operations at 151 military sites in 10 E
elSalv  1978 , the offices of the CUTS were bombed . We had to end our open activities and work secretly . Many women
EconoE  ar preparing for the strike , convinced that it had to end overmanning and weaken the unions '/$ grip on prod
SbWldA  ove that beautiful countryside when we are at our wits end over what to do with deep-mined coal . " <p_4> He
krw111  to US goods . .PP Chinese leaders called on the USA to end sanctions and to withdraw the threat of punitive t
GfCity  me , then you will have to reapply . However , it will end sooner if someone else claims income support or fa
IhTitl  s as the party of sound money . .PP Mr Baker failed to end speculation about opposition from Sir Alan Walters
krw209  nd the Soviet Union from concluding a formal treaty to end the Pacific War . The collapse of the Soviet Union
FedEur  made more public and the crucial Fifth Directive would end the abuse of special voting rights and outlaw exis
CntNeP  at an old woman ! " .PP Peter Scudamore will doubtless end the comparisons there ... He may be a former jocke
krw003  a programme of " national reconciliation " designed to end the conflict with the anti-government mujaheddin g
HairFA  ur photographer will be there to record the event . To end the day we will all have dinner before going to th
LcLeis  , is against Venables and wants him to go , if only to end the disastrous deadlock which is keeping the club
CntNeE  ron 's stepfather appealed for a concerted campaign to end the spate of car thefts that so often ended in tra
krw106  asked their followers at evening prayers in Algiers to end the strike . <ct> New government </ct> .PP On June
Charit  cough , tetanus or diphtheria . With your help we can  end this needless tragedy . .PP And if you are a paren
ClimbF  tre of outdoor clothing ( don't laugh ) , then I could end this review here . But thankfully , function still
envd41  tained from dead whales . Some , however , continue to end up as whale meat in restaurants . Times 10 , 27 No
BORain  to wrench free . " If we don't move Seawitch she could end up as wreckage on the rocks _ that 's what you sai
SaWldA  Kilbride , increasing employment opportunities , could end up being moved away again should they be privatise
NewScV  er ) with the theory of island biogeography , we still end up concluding " that there are <regsic=insufficent
HoCard  326> " Yet paradoxically that is just the way we could end up drifting if that majority support for a pragmat
GlWldA  ally engineered wrinkle-free tomato ) the plants could end up growing in a sewage farm somewhere , and this w
ZES1E2  y believe in and nobody fights back so everybody would end up having to agree . <p_3> However a war like the
CntNe0  . .PP It was the first inkling she had that she could  end up homeless . .PP Anne signed an agreement last Fe
citySP  the streetwise dealers require quicker money , and may end up in a bucket shop on the Continent . <p_9> Most
SMusic  king up a socio-cultural whole. ; Such theories always end up in some kind of <page=10> reductionism _ " upwa
20Ways  ! <DT> 2 <DD> <LI> <p_100> Fear that information will  end up in the hands of competitors . Experience has sh
TwstTa  g sure you got a first-class education just to let you end up like me , putting wheels on cars for the rest o
TaArti  . .PP Don't try to do too much in one day or you will  end up making impulse buys that you will regret , and
GuitaA  an everyday instrument , or whether it is destined to  end up mute behind glass in a collection somewhere . B
LadyKi  e annoying Kate and if he wasn't careful he just might end up on the receiving end of her tongue . She placed
NaComm  e Consumers '/$ Association has warned . Drivers could end up paying a " monopoly premium " to the big car fi
LdsUtD  per game and championships is a bit premature , we 'll end up sounding like scumites who always think they '1
Formul  vers . Certainly I thought at the time that Hunt would end up sponsored by Marlboro and driving a McLaren . <
MaFeat  . But if the guy tries to lay a finger on me , he 'll  end up staring at the moon ! " <ct> SMILER : Van Damme
SuitKi  oodily down your chin , but who cares ? You also often end up stuck in the loo with a tummy upset but honestl
Wychwo  ast , I ought to have tried , but I didn't think we 'd end up with a blizzard like this . I can't remember wh
deBono  ty and that house had a poor kitchen . The buyer might end up with a much more expensive house which had a be
Advert  e . Am going to a dance " . They might _ conceivably _ end up with a picture of Doris Day singing Ten cents a
HansrA  requirement for a new air defence frigate we shall not end up with another fiasco of expensive and fruitless
EconoH  ing internal competition free rein . But the world may end up with both projects , a waste of resources that
DogTod  re a diagnosis is made , the more likely the dog is to end up with long-term arthritis , another disease wher
TaSpor  with intent to harm his opponent ? .PP " It will just end up with long , protracted cases dragging the name
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Figure 1: Extract from a concordance from the British National Corpus, showing the word 'end'.

National Corpus, the two words 'end the' occur frequently together but they do not form a statistically significant unit, since the word 'the' is the commonest in the language. The combinations **end up** and **end in**, on the other hand, are shown to be more significant and tell the lexicographer something about the way the verb **end** behaves in normal use. Of course, a dictionary for general use cannot go into detailed statistical analysis of word combinations, but it can present examples that are typical of normal usage. In the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* particularly significant or important patterns are highlighted, in bold or in bold italics, e.g.

end

[no obj.] (**end in**) have as its final part, point, or result: *one in three marriages is now likely to end in divorce.*

[no obj.] (**end up**) eventually reach or come to a specified place, state, or course of action: *I ended up in Eritrea | you could end up with a higher income.*

For further details, see the section on *Grammar*.

2. Citations

While the British National Corpus has formed the backbone of the evidence used in compiling the *New Oxford Dictionary of English*, other corpora have also been used. These include, for example, a corpus of US English and a historical corpus. The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* has also made use of the citation database created by the Oxford Reading Programme, an ongoing research project in which readers select citations from a huge variety of specialist and non-specialist sources in all varieties of English. This database currently stands at around 40 million words and is growing at a rate of 4.5 million words a year.

3. Specialist reading

A general corpus does not, by definition, contain large quantities of specialized terminology. For this reason, a directed reading programme was set up specially for the *New Oxford Dictionary of English*,

enabling additional research and collection of citations in a number of neglected fields, for example antique collecting, food and cooking, boats and sailing, photography, video and audio, martial arts, and complementary medicine.

4. Examples

The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* contains many more examples of words in use than any other comparable dictionary. Generally, they are there to show typical uses of the word or sense. All examples are authentic, in that they represent actual usage. In the past, dictionaries have used made-up examples, partly because not enough authentic text was available and partly through an assumption that made-up examples were somehow better in that they could be tailored to the precise needs of the dictionary entry. Such a view finds little favour today, and it is now generally recognized that the 'naturalness' provided by authentic examples is of the utmost importance in giving an accurate picture of language in use.

Word Histories

The etymologies in standard dictionaries explain the language from which a word was brought into English, the period at which it is first recorded in English, and the development of modern word forms. While the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* does this, it also goes further. It explains sense development as well as morphological (or form) development. Information is presented clearly and with a minimum of technical terminology, and the perspective taken is that of the general reader who would like to know about word origins but who is not a philological specialist. In this context, the history of how and why a particular meaning developed from an apparently quite different older meaning is likely to be at least as interesting as, for example, what the original form was in Latin or Greek.

For example, the word history for the word **oaf** shows how the present meaning developed from the meaning 'elf', while the entry for **conker** shows how the word may be related both to 'conch' and 'conquer' (explaining how the original game of conkers was played with snail shells rather than the nut of the horse chestnut):

oaf

DEFINITION   a stupid, uncultured, or clumsy man.

ORIGIN   – ORIGIN early 17th cent.: variant of obsolete *auf*, from Old Norse *álfr* 'elf '. The original meaning was 'elf's child, changeling', later 'idiot child' and 'halfwit', generalized in the current sense.

conker

DEFINITION   Brit. the hard shiny dark brown nut of a horse chestnut tree.
                  ■ **(conkers)** [treated as sing.] a children's game in which each has a conker on the end of a string and takes turns in trying to break another's with it.

ORIGIN   – ORIGIN mid 19th cent. (a dialect word denoting a snail shell, with which the game, or a similar form of it, was originally played): perhaps from **CONCH**, but associated with (and frequently spelled) **CONQUER** in the 19th and early 20th cents: an alternative name was *conquerors*.

Additional special features of the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* include 'internal etymologies' and 'folk etymologies'. Internal etymologies are given within entries to explain the origin of particular senses, phrases, or idioms. For example, how did the figurative use of **red herring** come about? Why do we call something a **flash in the pan**?

red herring

DEFINITION   **1** a dried smoked herring, which is turned red by the smoke.
                  2 something, especially a clue, which is or is intended to be misleading or distracting: *the book is fast-paced, exciting, and full of red herrings.*

ORIGIN   [ORIGIN: so named from the practice of using the scent of red herring in training hounds.]

flash

DEFINITION   **flash in the pan** a thing or person whose sudden but brief success is not repeated or repeatable: *our start to the season was just a flash in the pan.*

ORIGIN   [ORIGIN: with allusion to priming of a firearm, the flash arising from an explosion of gunpowder within the lock.]

The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* presents the information in a straightforward, user-friendly fashion immediately following the relevant definition.

In a similar vein, folk etymologies—those explanations which are unfounded but nevertheless well known to many people—have traditionally simply been ignored in dictionaries. The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* gives an account of widely held but often erroneous folk etymologies for the benefit of the general reader, explaining competing theories and assessing their relative merits where applicable.

posh

ORIGIN   – ORIGIN early 20th cent.: perhaps from slang *posh*, denoting a dandy. There is no evidence to support the folk etymology that *posh* is formed from the initials of *port out starboard home* (referring to the practice of using the more comfortable accommodation, out of the heat of the sun, on ships between England and India).

cherub

ORIGIN   – ORIGIN Old English *cherubin*, ultimately (via Latin and Greek) from Hebrew *kĕrūb*, plural *kĕrūbīm*. A rabbinic folk etymology, which explains the Hebrew singular form as representing Aramaic *kĕ-rabyā* 'like a child', led to the representation of the cherub as a child.

Researching word histories is similar in some respects to archaeology: the evidence is often partial or not there at all, and etymologists must make informed decisions using the evidence available, however inadequate it may be. From time to time new evidence becomes available, and the known history of a word may need to be reconsidered. In this, the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* has been able to draw on the extensive expertise and ongoing research of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Usage Notes

Interest in questions of good usage is widespread among English speakers everywhere, and many issues are hotly debated. In the *New Oxford Dictionary of English*, traditional issues have been reappraised, and guidance is given on various points, old and new. The aim is to help people to use the language more accurately, more clearly, and more elegantly, and to give information and offer reassurance in the face of some of the more baffling assertions about 'correctness' that are sometimes made.

This reappraisal has involved looking carefully at evidence of actual usage (in the British National Corpus, the citations collected by the Oxford Reading Programme, and other sources) in order to find out where mistakes are actually being made, and where confusion and ambiguity actually arise. The issues on which journalists and others tend to comment have been reassessed and a judgement made about whether their comments are justified.

From the 15th century onwards, traditionalists have been objecting to particular senses of certain English words and phrases, for example 'aggravate', 'due to', and 'hopefully'. Certain grammatical structures, too, have been singled out for adverse comment, notably the split infinitive and the use of a preposition at the end of a clause. Some of these objections are founded on very dubious arguments, for example the notion that English grammatical structures should precisely parallel those of Latin or that meaning change of any kind is inherently suspect.

USAGE NOTE

preposition

USAGE There is a traditional view, first set forth by the 17th-century poet and dramatist John Dryden, that it is incorrect to put a preposition at the end of a sentence, as in *where do you come from?* or *she's not a writer I've ever come across.* The rule was formulated on the basis that, since in Latin a preposition cannot come after the word it governs or is linked with, the same should be true of English. The problem is that English is not like Latin in this respect, and in many cases (particularly in questions and with phrasal verbs) the attempt to move the preposition produces awkward, unnatural-sounding results. Winston Churchill famously objected to the rule, saying 'This is the sort of English *up with which* I will not put.' In standard English the placing of a preposition at the end of a sentence is widely accepted, provided the use sounds natural and the meaning is clear.

USAGE NOTE

due

USAGE **Due to** in the sense 'because of', as in *he had to retire due to an injury*, has been condemned as incorrect on the grounds that **due** is an adjective and should not be used as a preposition. However, the prepositional use, first recorded at the end of the 19th century, is now common in all types of literature and is regarded as part of standard English.

USAGE NOTE

aggravate

USAGE **Aggravate** in the sense 'annoy or exasperate' dates back to the 17th century and has been so used by respected writers ever since. This use is still regarded as incorrect by some traditionalists on the grounds that it is too radical a departure from the etymological meaning of 'make heavy'. It is, however, comparable to meaning changes in hundreds of other words which have long been accepted without comment.

The usage notes in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* take the view that English is English, not Latin, and that English is, like all languages, subject to change. Good usage is usage that gets the writer's message across, not usage that conforms to some arbitrary rules that fly in the face of historical fact or current evidence. The editors of the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* are well aware that the prescriptions of pundits in the past have had remarkably little practical effect on the way the language is actually used. A good dictionary reports the language as it is, not as the editors (or anyone else) would wish it to be, and the usage notes must give guidance that accords with observed facts about present-day usage.

This is not to imply that the issues are straightforward or that there are simple solutions, however. Much of the debate about use of language is highly political and controversy is, occasionally, inevitable. Changing social attitudes have stigmatized long-established uses such as the word 'man' to denote the human race in general, for example, and have highlighted the absence of a gender-neutral singular pronoun meaning both 'he' and 'she' (for which purpose 'they' is increasingly being used). Similarly, words such as 'race' and 'native' are now associated with particular problems of sensitivity in use. The usage notes in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* offer information and practical advice on such issues.

USAGE NOTE

man

USAGE Traditionally the word **man** has been used to refer not only to adult males but also to human beings in general, regardless of sex. There is a historical explanation for this: in Old English the principal sense of **man** was 'a human being', and the words **wer** and **wif** were used to refer specifically to 'a male person' and 'a female person' respectively. Subsequently, **man** replaced **wer** as the normal term for 'a male person', but at the same time the older sense 'a human being' remained in use.
In the second half of the twentieth century the generic use of **man** to refer to 'human beings in general' (as in *reptiles were here long before man appeared on the earth*) became problematic; the use is now often regarded as sexist or at best old-fashioned. In some contexts, alternative terms such as **the human race** or

humankind may be used. Fixed phrases and sayings such as *time and tide wait for no man* can be easily rephrased, e.g. *time and tide wait for nobody.* However, in other cases, particularly in compound forms, alternatives have not yet become established: there are no standard accepted alternatives for **manpower** or the verb **man**, for example.

USAGE NOTE

native

USAGE In contexts such as *a native of Boston* the use of the noun **native** is quite acceptable. But when used as a noun without qualification, as in *this dance is a favourite with the natives*, it is more problematic. In modern use it is used humorously to refer to the local inhabitants of a particular place *(New York in the summer was too hot even for the natives).* In other contexts it has an old-fashioned feel and, because of being closely associated with a colonial European outlook on non-white peoples living in remote places, it may cause offence.

Standard English

Unless otherwise stated, the words and senses recorded in this dictionary are all part of standard English; that is, they are in normal use in both speech and writing everywhere in the world, at many different levels of formality, ranging from official documents to casual conversation. Some words, however, are appropriate only in particular contexts, and these are labelled accordingly. The technical term for a particular level of use in language is **register**.

The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* uses the following register labels:

formal: normally used only in writing, in contexts such as official documents.

informal: normally used only in contexts such as conversations or letters between friends.

dated: no longer used by the majority of English speakers, but still encountered occasionally, especially among the older generation.

archaic: very old-fashioned language, not in ordinary use at all today, but sometimes used to give a deliberately old-fashioned effect or found in works of the past that are still widely read.

historical: still used today, but only to refer to some practice or artefact that is no longer part of the modern world, e.g.

baldric

historical **a belt for a sword or other piece of equipment, worn over one shoulder and reaching down to the opposite hip.**

almoner

historical **an official distributor of alms.**

literary: found only or mainly in literature written in an 'elevated' style.

poetic: found only or mainly in poetry.

technical: normally used only in technical and specialist language, though not necessarily restricted to any specific subject field.

rare: not in normal use.

humorous: used with the intention of sounding funny or playful.

dialect: not used in the standard language, but still widely used in certain local regions of the English-speaking world. A distinction is made between traditional dialect, which is generally to do with rural society and agricultural practices which have mostly died out, and contemporary dialect, where speakers may not even be aware that the term is in fact a regionalism. The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* aims to include the main contemporary dialect terms, but does not set out to record traditional dialect.

offensive: language that is likely to cause offence, particularly racial offence, whether the speaker intends it or not.

derogatory: language intended to convey a low opinion or cause personal offence.

vulgar slang: informal language that may cause offence, often because it refers to the bodily functions of sexual activity or excretion, which are still widely regarded as taboo.

World English

English is spoken as a first language by more than 300 million people throughout the world, and used as a second language by many millions more. It is the language of international communication in trade, diplomacy, sport, science, technology, and countless other fields.

The main regional standards are British, US and Canadian, Australian and New Zealand, South African, Indian, and West Indian. Within each of these regional varieties, a number of highly differentiated local dialects may be found. For example, within British English, Scottish and Irish English have a long history and a number of distinctive features, which have in turn influenced particular North American and other varieties.

The scope of a dictionary such as the *New Oxford Dictionary of English*, given the breadth of material it aims to cover, must be limited in the main to the vocabulary of the standard language throughout the world rather than local dialectal variation. Nevertheless, the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* includes thousands of regionalisms encountered in standard contexts in the different English-speaking areas of the world, e.g.

bakkie

S. African a light truck or pickup truck.

larrikin

Austral. a boisterous, often badly behaved young man.
■ a person with apparent disregard for convention; a maverick: [as modifier] *the larrikin trade union leader.*

ale

[mass noun] chiefly Brit. any beer other than lager, stout, or porter: *a draught of ale* | [count noun] *traditional cask-conditioned ales.*
■ N. Amer. beer brewed by top fermentation.

The underlying approach has been to get away from the traditional, parochial notion that 'correct' English is spoken only in England and more particularly only in Oxford or London. A network of consultants in all parts of the English-speaking world has assisted in this by giving information and answering queries—by e-mail, on a regular, often daily basis—on all aspects of the language in a particular region. Often, the aim has been to find out whether a particular word, sense, or expression, well known and standard in British English, is used anywhere else. The picture that emerges is one of complex interactions among an overlapping set of regional standards.

The vast majority of words and senses in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* are common to all the major regional standard varieties of English, but where important local differences exist, the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* records them. There are over 14,000 geographical labels on words and senses in this dictionary, but this contrasts with more than ten times that number which are not labelled at all.

The complexity of the overall picture has necessarily been simplified, principally for reasons of space and clarity of presentation. For example, a label such as 'chiefly Brit.' implies but does not state that a term is not standard in American English, though it may nevertheless be found in some local varieties in the US. In addition, the label 'US' implies that the use is typically US (and probably originated in the US) and is not standard in British English, but it might be found in other

varieties such as Australian or South African English. The label 'Brit.', on the other hand, implies that the use is found typically in standard British English but is not found in standard American English, though it may be found elsewhere.

Spelling

It is often said that English spelling is both irregular and illogical, and it is certainly true that it is only indirectly related to contemporary pronunciation. English spelling reflects not modern pronunciation but the pronunciation of the 14th century, as used by Chaucer. This traditional spelling was reinforced in the 16th and 17th centuries, in particular through the influence of the works of Shakespeare and the Authorized Version of the Bible. However, in the two centuries between Chaucer and Shakespeare English pronunciation had undergone huge changes, but spelling had failed to follow.

In the 18th century, standard spelling became almost completely fixed. The dictionaries written in this period, particularly Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), helped establish this national standard, which, with only minor change and variation, is the standard accepted in English today. The complex history of the English language, together with the absence of any ruling body imposing 'spelling reform', has ensured that many idiosyncrasies and anomalies in standard spelling have not only arisen but have also been preserved.

The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* gives advice and information on spelling, particularly those cases which are irregular or which otherwise cause difficulty for native speakers. The main categories are summarized below.

Variant spellings

The main form of each word given in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* is always the standard British spelling. If there is a standard variant, e.g. a standard US spelling variant, this is indicated at the top of the entry and is cross-referred if its alphabetical position is more than three entries distant from the main entry.

oesophagus (US **esophagus**)
esophagus US spelling of **OESOPHAGUS.**

filo (also **phyllo**)
phyllo variant spelling of **FILO.**

Other variants, such as archaic, old-fashioned, or informal spellings, are cross-referred to the main entry, but are not themselves listed at the parent entry.

Esquimau archaic spelling of **ESKIMO.**

Hyphenation

Although standard spelling in English is fixed, the use of hyphenation is not. In standard English a few general rules are followed, and these are outlined below.

Hyphenation of noun compounds: There is no hard-and-fast rule to determine whether, for example, **airstream, air stream,** or **air-stream** is correct. All forms are found in use: all are recorded in the British National Corpus and other standard texts. However, there is a broad tendency to avoid hyphenation for noun compounds in modern English (except when used to show grammatical function: see below). Thus there is, for example, a preference for **airstream** *rather than* **air-stream** and for **air raid** rather than **air-raid.** Although this is a tendency in both British and US English there is an additional preference in US English for the form to be one word and in British English for the