

THE
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AMERICAN COLLEGE
DICTIONARY



牛津

大学英语词典

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序

张柏然

经由上海译文出版社引进,《牛津大学英语词典》(The Oxford American College Dictionary 影印本)正式登陆中国图书市场。该社词典教育编辑室主任朱亚军博士要我抽时间翻看一样书,并嘱笔写一篇序文。编词典,我有一些实践经验;谈理论,虽近年来有所涉猎,但不甚了了,可以说只是一名上了点年纪的学徒。现在就以老学徒的身份说几点读后的感想吧!

《牛津大学英语词典》是牛津大学出版社面向 21 世纪推出的首部大学(版)英语词典。原书名中有 2 个关键词:牛津、美国大学(版)。对于前者,学英语查词典的人都知道,“牛津”是世界上老牌出版社中的王牌,100 多年前出版的《牛津英语词典》(The Oxford English Dictionary)以凝重的传统感、严谨的笔风、翔实的内容著称,堪称“词典之帝”(美国语言学家门肯 [H. L. Mencken] 语),一直被视作英语词典的“终极权威”,此后它连同以其为母本繁衍出来的“子子孙孙”,成了英语词典编纂史上的丰碑;对于后者,国内熟悉这类词典的人还不是很多。上个世纪 50 年代以来,各类美国词典中,成绩卓著的是收词量在 15 万条左右的一般案头词典 (desk dictionary)。这类词典着重为大学生读者服务,特别注意收录大学各类课程中可能涉及的词汇,语词条目和百科条目并举,在美国常称为“大学(版)词典”(college 或 collegiate dictionary)。一向标举“标准英语”(King's 或 Queen's English)的牛津为何在新世纪伊始便把目光投向大西洋彼岸,关注起美国英语,组织人马编纂美国大学英语词典,并把它当作牛津系统词典的新起点 (a new departure)? 词典编者在前言中已经给出了答案:这是因为虽说英语现在已是一种世界通用语,但是英语的中心却是在美国。诚者斯言,求创新也要务实,这才是出版家的眼识。这使我联想起 19 世纪中叶美国词典编纂史上的第一次“辞书大战”(War of the dictionaries)。1828 年,韦伯斯特 (Noah Webster) 用后半生心血苦心孤诣编写的《美国英语词典》面世了。两年后,另一个新英格兰人武斯特 (Joseph E. Worcester) 编出了《发音、求解综合英语词典》(后于 1846 年更名为《通用校勘英语词典》)。前者怀着为美国人争气、为民族争光的动机,锐意革新,倡导文字改革,主张与“旧世界”彻底决裂;而后者则趋于保守,偏向英国传统,反对韦伯斯特的革新主张和做法。由于各自的出版商在背后推波助澜,双方展开了激烈的角逐。较量了二、三十年,最后以后者悄然退出竞争而告终。这两位美国辞书界先哲如果地下有灵,得见这本装帧精良的《牛津大学英语词典》,看到老枝发新芽、名牌新起点这番气象,想必会辗转反侧,感到大为震惊!

《牛津大学英语词典》共收录单词、短语、义项等 40 余万条,提供丰富的例证、精当

的词源信息以及惯用法说明等，另外还配以 1000 余幅插图或照片，是一部使用新方法编写的美国英语词典。以往牛津版词典大多依据那部鸿篇巨制《牛津英语词典》，然而《牛津大学英语词典》却转向 1998 年出版的《新牛津英语词典》(The New Oxford Dictionary of English)，利用计算机语料库，吸收现代语言学、认知科学等方面的研究成果，吸取英语学习词典的成功经验，借鉴美国大学(版)词典的编纂工艺，形成了一部具有鲜明特色的英语工具书。翻开一页页词典，迎面拂来一股股清新的创新、求实之风。

纵览英语语言学的发展史，可见词典学随语言学的层层演进而得以“水涨船高”式地发展，词典力作也随之问世。例如，历史主义语言学催生了《牛津英语词典》这部旷古之作；描写主义语言学滥觞之时，《韦氏三版新国际词典》便应运而生；《牛津大学英语词典》与《新牛津英语词典》一样，以现代语言学理论尤其是认知语言学、语料库语言学为指导，大胆改革，勇于创新，向世人昭示了新世纪英语词典编写的新模式。拿词典中的义项排列来说，这历来是词典学家伤脑筋的问题。有的词典着眼于历史，譬如《牛津英语词典》，从最早的意义讲起，往往是废义、古义、罕用义打头，把活泼泼的常用义掩藏其间，急煞查阅人；有的词典着眼于当代，根据词频统计，从最常用的意义讲起，方便是方便了，但有“见树不见林”之弊，来源不一的词义凑在一起，显得杂乱无章，不利于理解词义。《牛津大学英语词典》释义的理论基础是认知语言学中的“原型理论”(prototype theory)。正如词典前言所说：“语言学家、认知科学家等研制出分析用法和语义的新技术，《牛津大学英语词典》充分利用这些研究成果。最突出的是强调用法和语义的‘中心和典型性’，以区别与传统的‘意义的充分必要条件’……”具体做法是：义项的排列首先考虑其词性，最主要的词性排在前面，次要的排在后面。然后，再列出词目的中心义或典型义，随后列出由中心义演变而来的若干次要意义，次要意义则按照使用频率的高低来排先后顺序。这种以中心义或典型义为基础的排列方法，既方便检索，又显示出词义之间的联系，一定程度上解决了一直困扰词典学家的义项排列问题。

语料库语言学和计算机信息技术的迅猛发展给词典的编纂带来了一场革命，使得原来不可能的事变得可能。《牛津大学英语词典》的主要依据是拥有 1 亿词的“不列颠国家语料库”(The British National Corpus)以及包括美国英语的语料库在内的其他几个语料库。充分利用语料库为词典的选词和义项的确立、惯用法说明和交代搭配信息、例证的择取等方面提供了科学的依据和雄厚的基础。除了语料库之外，《牛津大学英语词典》的编写还利用了“牛津北美阅读计划”(The Oxford North American Reading Program)的引文语料库。这项研究计划由分布在世界各地的专家，阅读用英国英语、加拿大英语、加勒比英语、印度英语、南非英语、澳大利亚英语和新西兰英语等各种英语变体写的专业和非专业文献，收集新词、新义和新成语，以确保这本词典在充分描写美国英语的同时能全面反映出作为世界通用语的英语使用的真实情况。

词典编纂中经常争论这样一个问题，词典究竟该是“规范的”还是“描写的”。约翰逊(Samuel Johnson)的《英语词典》以及《牛津英语词典》的主要目的之一，是“规范”语言，是教授人们如何正确使用英语，对各种所谓“非主流”的用法往往是不屑一顾的。而上世纪 60 年代初出版的《韦氏三版新国际词典》则走向另一个极端，完全采取描写主义的做法，“有闻必录”。《牛津大学英语词典》的编者认识到，时代在前进，语言在发展，特别是当今世界范围内“全球化”之风劲吹，文化呈多元化趋势，人们的价值观也随之发生了深刻的变化。面对“规定”与“描写”这对矛盾，他们则是描写和规定并重，在所设的数以百计的“惯用法说明”栏中，根据语言使用的事实，搭准时代的脉搏，充分尊重今人的价值判断趋向，既修正传统，肯定了如“分裂不定式”、“hopefully”等被语法学家视为非规范的用法，也不时地提醒读者在使用女性化后缀 -ess、Christian name、Negro 等词语时要持谨慎态度，要

注意诸如此类的用法的敏感性。这些做法对引导读者正确而又得体地使用英语来说不啻是一剂良帖。

前不久，英国词典学家哈特曼（R. R. K. Hartmann）曾经指出：“一些英国学习词典的特色正在被本族语词典吸收过来，例如《新牛津英语词典》（1998）……”同样，《牛津大学英语词典》的很多特色明显地借鉴了学习词典。首先，传统意义上的为本族人编写的词典一般不提供详细的语法信息。而该词典提供较为详细的语法信息，使用简明的表示方式，尽量避免使用语法术语和缩略语。这是因为语言学家们注意到，词的意义往往和句型、搭配及句法结构紧密联系在一起。这是向学习词典方向迈出的重要一步；其次，《牛津大学英语词典》注重提供词的搭配信息。词的意义往往取决于本词与他词的搭配以及所使用的语法结构。如前所说，该词典在词典编写中充分利用计算机语料库技术。语料库提供了大量的词语搭配和语法结构素材，使人们对语言的运用，特别是对词的使用情况，有更准确的理解。《牛津大学英语词典》把常用的搭配信息都用黑体字标出，有的列在释义之前，有的出现在例句中，便于学生学习和模仿。

包括牛津系列词典在内的英国词典传统只收语词，不收百科性词条，认为词典只管释“名”，即提供有关“指物符号”的信息；而释“物”，即对“所指之物”的解释，应是百科全书的任务。《牛津大学英语词典》一反这种做法，向美国词典学习，收录了数以千计的人名、地名和其他专名。这类词目不光提供基本信息，还扼要地提供一些相关资讯，比同类词典大大进了一步，正可谓“青出于蓝而胜于蓝”。

这部《牛津大学英语词典》还有其他特色，兹不一一列举。记得有人说过，写“序”之类的营生，就好比充当领人游览观光的导游。我权且当了一回“导游”，但无论这“导游”的解说词是否得要领，只要“游人”听了之后能生出一睹“庐山真面目”的欲望，我也就可以交差了。

2005年6月8日

于南京大学北园丁字楼

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Preface

The *Oxford American College Dictionary* is a new kind of college dictionary, written on new principles. It builds on the excellence of the lexicographical traditions of scholarship and analysis of evidence as set down by the *Oxford English Dictionary* over a century ago, but it is also a new, specifically American, departure. The *Oxford American College Dictionary* is a dictionary of current American English, based on 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 analyzing usage and meaning, and the *Oxford American College Dictionary* 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-honored search for "necessary conditions" of meaning (that is, 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 *Oxford American College Dictionary*, 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 *Oxford American College Dictionary* aims in part to account for the dynamism, imaginativeness, and flexibility of ordinary American usage. The *Oxford American College Dictionary* records and explains all normal meanings and uses of well-attested words, but also illustrates transferred, figurative, and derivative meanings, insofar 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 this dictionary lies the evidence. This evidence forms the basis for everything that we, as lexicographers, are able to say about the language and the words within it. In particular, the large databank of searchable electronic texts collected by Oxford 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 analyze this databank and other corpora, the editors have been able to look at the behavior of each word in detail in its natural contexts, and so to build up a picture for every word in the dictionary.

Databank analysis has been complemented by analysis of other types of evidence: the *Oxford American College Dictionary* makes extensive use of the citation database of the Oxford North American Reading Program, a collection of citations (currently standing at more than 69 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 program targeted previously neglected specialist fields as diverse as computing, alternative medicine, antique collecting, and sports.

The general approach to defining in the *Oxford American College Dictionary* has particular application for specialist vocabulary. Here, in the context of dealing with highly technical information that may be unfamiliar to the nonspecialist 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.

The *Oxford American College Dictionary* views the language from the perspective that English, though a world language, is now centered in the United States, and that American vocabulary and usage deserve special attention. Although the focus is on American English, a network of consultants throughout the English-speaking world has enabled us to ensure excellent coverage of world English, from the United Kingdom and Canada 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.

How to use this dictionary

New part of speech introduced by ▶

Part of speech

ear¹ /ɪr/ ▶n. the organ of hearing and balance in humans and other vertebrates, esp. the external part. The mammalian ear is composed of three parts. The outer or external ear consists of a fleshy external flap and a tube leading to the eardrum or tympanum. The middle ear is an air-filled cavity connected to the throat, containing three small linked bones that transmit vibrations from the eardrum to the inner ear. The inner ear is a complex fluid-filled labyrinth including the spiral cochlea and the three semicircular canals. ■ an organ sensitive to sound in other animals. ■ [in sing.] an ability to recognize, appreciate, and reproduce sounds, esp. music or language: *an ear for rhythm and melody*. ■ a person's willingness to listen and pay attention to something: *offers a sympathetic ear to pet owners*. ■ an ear-shaped thing, esp. the handle of a jug. —**eared** adj. [in combination] *long-eared*; **ear-less** adj.

Core sense

Subsenses introduced by ■

Label (showing level of formality)

PHRASES **be all ears** informal be listening eagerly and attentively. **bring something (down) about one's ears** *bring something*, esp. misfortune, on oneself. **one's ears are burning** one is subconsciously aware of being talked about or criticized. **grin (or smile) from ear to ear** smile broadly. **have something coming out of one's ears** informal have a substantial or excessive amount of something: *he has money coming out of his ears*. **have someone's ear** have access to and influence with someone. **have (or keep) an ear to the ground** be well informed about events and trends. **in (at) one ear and out (at) the other** heard but disregarded or quickly forgotten: *advice seems to go in one ear and out the other*. **listen with half an ear** not give one's attention. **be out on one's ear** informal be dismissed or ejected ignominiously. **up to one's ears in** informal very busy with or deeply involved in: *I'm up to my ears in work*.

Phrase

Example (showing typical use)

Homonym number (indicates different word with same spelling)

ear² ▶n. the seed-bearing head or spike of a cereal plant. ■ a head of corn.

Pronunciation

Earhart /'erhɑ:t/, Amelia Mary (1898–1937), US aviator. In 1932, she became the first woman to fly an airplane across the Atlantic Ocean by herself. In 1937, her plane disappeared somewhere over the Pacific Ocean during an around-the-world flight.

Encyclopedic entry (biography)

Common collocation (highlighted within the example)

earn /ɜ:rn/ ▶v. [trans.] obtain (money) in return for labor or services: *earns his living as a truck driver*. ■ [with two objs.] (of an activity or action) cause (someone) to obtain (money): *the win earned them \$50,000 in prize money*. ■ (of capital invested) gain (money) as interest or profit. ■ gain or incur in return for one's behavior or achievements: *through the years she has earned affection and esteem*.

PHRASES **earn one's keep** work in return for food and accommodations. ■ be worth the time, money, or effort spent on one.

Label (showing regional distribution)

Label (showing currency)

esquire /'eskwaɪr; i'skwɪr/ ▶n. **1 (Esquire)** (abbr.: **Esq.**) a title appended to a lawyer's surname. ■ Brit. a polite title appended to a man's name when no other title is used, typically in the address of a letter or other documents. **2** historical a young nobleman who, in training for knighthood, acted as an attendant to a knight. ■ an officer in the service of a king or nobleman. ■ [as title] a landed proprietor or country squire.

enormity /i'nɔːrmɪtɪ/ ▶ n. (pl. **-ies**) **1** (the enormity of) the great or extreme scale, seriousness, or extent of something perceived as bad or morally wrong. ■ (in neutral use) the large size or scale of something: *the enormity of his intellect*. See **usage** below. **2** a grave crime or sin: *the enormities of the Hitler regime*.
USAGE This word is imprecisely used to mean 'great size,' as in *it is difficult to comprehend the enormity of the continent*, but the original and preferred meaning is 'extreme wickedness,' as in *the enormity of the mass murders*. To indicate enormous size, the words *enormousness, immensity, vastness, hugeness*, etc., are preferable.

Word history
(showing
morphological and
sense development)

enormity **Word History**
 Late Middle English: via Old French from Latin *enormitas*, from *enormis*, from *e-* (variant of *ex-*) 'out of' + *norma* 'pattern, standard.' The word originally meant 'deviation from legal or moral rectitude' and 'transgression.' Current senses have been influenced by **ENORMOUS**. See **USAGE** above.

Subject label

ecdysis /'ekdɪsɪs/ ▶ n. Zoology the process of shedding the old skin (in reptiles) or casting off the outer cuticle (in insects and other arthropods). — **ecdysial** /ek'dɪzɪəl/ **adj.**

Syllabic break

echidna /ə'kɪdnə/ ▶ n. a spiny insectivorous egg-laying mammal (family Tachyglossidae, order Monotremata) with a long snout and claws, native to Australia and New Guinea. Also called **SPINY ANTEATER**.

Technical information
(chiefly for animals
and plants)

Alternative name

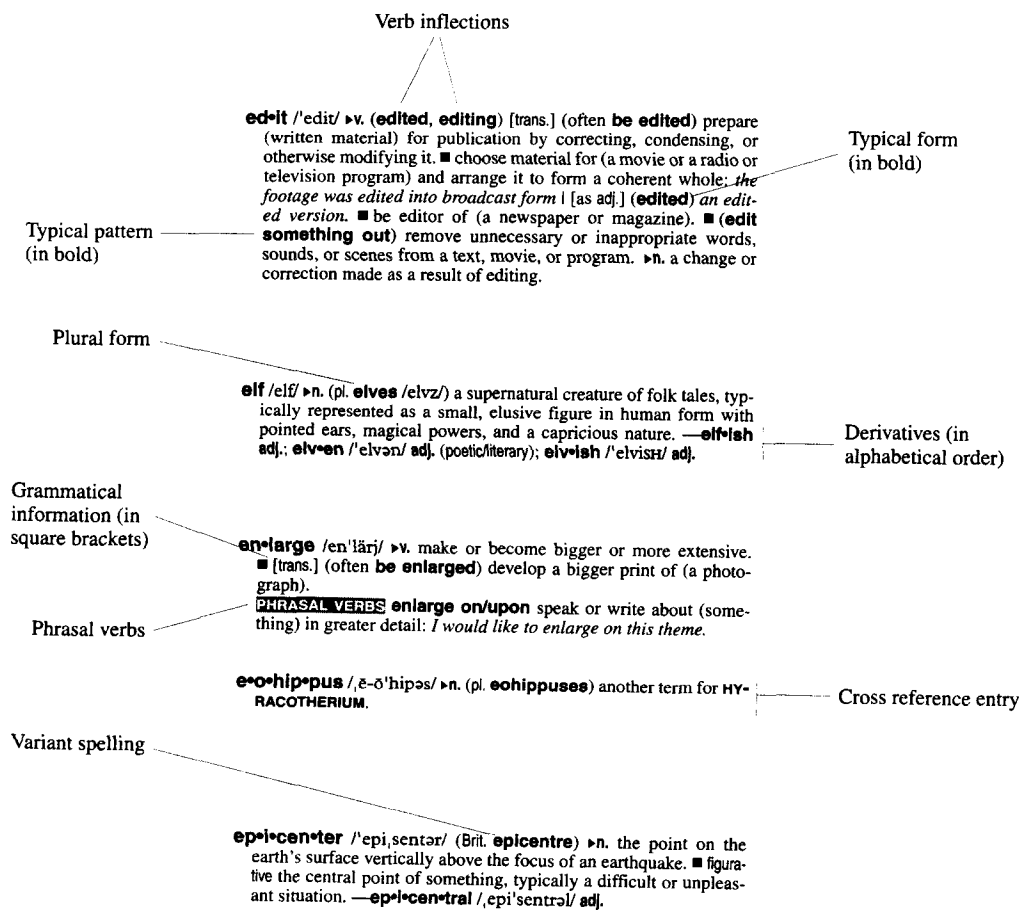
Ecuador /'ekwə,dɔːr/ a republic in northwestern South America. See **box**. — **Ecuadorian** /'ekwə'dɔːrɪən/ **adj. & n.**

Encyclopedic entry
(place name)



Ecuador
Official name: Republic of Ecuador
Location: northwestern South America, between Colombia and Peru, bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean
Area: 106,900 square miles (276,800 sq km)
Population: 13,184,000
Capital: Quito
Languages: Spanish (official), Quechua
Currency: US dollar (formerly sucre)

Additional
information
(in separate block)



Key to the pronunciations

This dictionary uses a simple respelling system to show how entries are pronounced, using the symbols listed below. Generally, only the first of two or more identical headwords will have a pronunciation respelling. Where a derivative simply adds a common suffix such as **-less**, **-ness**, or **-ly** to the headword, the derivative may not have a pronunciation respelling unless some other element of the pronunciation also changes.

æ	as in hat /hæt/, fashion /'fæʃən/, carry /'kæri/
ɑ	as in day /dɑ/, rate /reɪ/, maid /mɑd/, prey /preɪ/
ä	as in lot /lät/, father /'fäTHər/, barnyard /'bärnfjərd/
b	as in big /big/
CH	as in church /CHəɪCH/, picture /'pɪkCHər/
d	as in dog /dɔg/, bed /bed/
e	as in men /men/, bet /bet/, ferry /'ferē/
ē	as in feet /fē/, receive /ri'sēv/
er	as in air /er/, care /ker/
ə	as in about /ə'bowt/, soda /'sɔdə/, mother /'məTHər/, person /'pɜrsən/
f	as in free /frē/, graph /græf/, tough /tʌf/
g	as in get /get/, exist /ɪg'zɪst/, egg /eg/
h	as in her /hər/, behave /bi'häv/
i	as in fit /fit/, guild /gɪld/, women /'wɪmɪn/
ī	as in time /tīm/, guide /gīd/, hire /hīr/, sky /skī/
ir	as in ear /īr/, beer /bīr/, pierce /pīrs/
j	as in judge /jʌj/, carriage /'kærij/
k	as in kettle /'ketl/, cut /kət/, quick /kwɪk/
l	as in lap /læp/, cellar /'selər/, cradle /'krædl/
m	as in main /mān/, dam /dæm/
n	as in need /nēd/, honor /'änər/, maiden /'mädn/
NG	as in sing /sɪNG/, anger /'æNGgər/
ō	as in go /gō/, promote /prə'mōt/
ô	as in law /lô/, thought /THô/, lore /lôr/
oi	as in boy /boi/, noisy /'noizē/
oo	as in wood /wōod/, football /'fōot,bôl/, sure /SHōər/
oo	as in food /fōod/, music /'myōōzɪk/
ow	as in mouse /mōws/, coward /'kow(-ə)rd/
p	as in put /pōt/, cap /kæp/
r	as in run /rən/, fur /fər/, spirit /'spɪrɪt/
s	as in sit /sit/, lesson /'lesən/, face /fās/
SH	as in shut /SHət/, social /'sōSHəl/, action /'æksSHən/
t	as in top /täp/, seat /sē/
†	as in butter /'bətər/, forty /'fōrtē/, bottle /'bätl/
TH	as in thin /THɪn/, truth /trōōTH/
TH	as in then /THen/, father /'fäTHər/
v	as in never /'nevər/, very /'verē/
w	as in wait /wāt/, quit /kwɪt/
(h)w	as in when /('h)wen/, which /('h)wɪCH/
y	as in yet /yet/, accuse /ə'kyōōz/
z	as in zipper /'zɪpər/, musician /myōō'zɪʃən/
ZH	as in measure /'mezZHər/, vision /'vɪZHən/

Note: The sound /ɒ/ does not occur in American English, and words which have this vowel in British pronunciation will instead have /ɑ/ in American English.

Foreign Sounds

KH	as in Bach /bäKH/ A fricative consonant pronounced with the tongue in the same position as for /k/, as in German <i>Buch</i> and <i>ich</i> , or Scottish <i>loch</i> .
N	as in en route /än'rōō/, Rodin /rō'dæn/ The /N/ does not represent a consonant; it indicates that the preceding vowel is nasalized, as in French <i>bon</i> (bon voyage) and <i>en</i> (en route).
œ	as in hors d'oeuvre /ɔr'dœvrə/, Goethe /'gøetə/ A vowel made by rounding the lips as with /ô/ while saying /e/ or /ä/, as in French <i>boeuf</i> and <i>feu</i> , or German <i>Hölle</i> and <i>Höhle</i> .
Y	as in Lully /lY'lē/, Utrecht /'Y,trekH/ A vowel made by rounding the lips as with /ô/ or /ō/ while saying /i/ or /N/, as in French <i>rue</i> or German <i>fühlen</i> .

Stress Marks

Stress (or 'accent') is represented by marks placed before the affected syllable. The primary stress mark is a short, raised vertical line /' / which signifies that the heaviest emphasis should be placed on the following syllable. The secondary stress mark is a short, lowered vertical line /, / which signifies a somewhat weaker emphasis than on the syllable with primary stress.

Variant Pronunciations

There are several ways in which variant pronunciations are indicated in the respellings. Some respellings show a pronunciation symbol within parentheses to indicate a possible variation in pronunciation; for example, in **sandwich** /'sæn(d)wɪCH/ sometimes the /d/ is pronounced, while at other times it is not.

Variant pronunciations may be respelled in full, separated by semicolons. The more common pronunciation is listed first, if this can be determined, but many variants are so common and widespread as to be of equal status.

Variant pronunciations may be indicated by respelling only the part of the word that changes. A hyphen will replace the part of the pronunciation that has remained the same. These 'cutback' respellings will occur primarily in three areas:

- where the headword has a variant pronunciation:
quasiparticle /,kwäzi'pärtəkəl/; /,kwäzē-/
- in derivative forms:
dangle /'dæNGgəl/
dangler /-glər/
dangly /-glē/

Note: Cutbacks in derivatives always refer back to the headword respelling, not the preceding derivative.

- at irregular plurals:
parenthesis /pə'renthəsis/
parentheses /-,sēz/

Note: A hyphen sometimes serves to separate syllables where the respelling might otherwise look confusing, as at **reinforce** /,rē-in'fōrs/.

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A ¹ /ə/ (also **a**) **n.** (pl. **As** or **A's**) **1** the first letter of the alphabet. ■ denoting the first in a set of items, categories, sizes, etc. ■ denoting the first of two or more hypothetical people or things: *suppose A had killed B.* ■ the highest class of academic mark. ■ (usu. *a*) the first fixed quantity in an algebraic expression. ■ (**A**) the human blood type (in the ABO system) containing the A agglutinin and lacking the B. **2** a shape like that of a capital A: [in combination] *an A-shape.* See also **A-FRAME**, **A-LINE**. **3** Music the sixth note of the diatonic scale of C major. ■ a key based on a scale with A as its keynote.

PHRASES **from A to B** from one's starting point to one's destination: *most road atlases will get you from A to B.* **from A to Z** over the entire range; completely: *make sure you understand the subject from A to Z.*

A² **abbr.** ■ ace (used in describing play in bridge and other card games): *you cash AK of hearts.* ■ ampere(s). ■ (**Å**) ångström(s). ■ answer: *Q: What's the senator's zodiac sign? A: He's a Leo.* ■ (in personal ads) Asian. ■ a dry cell battery size.

a /ə/ (**an** before a vowel sound) [called the indefinite article] **adj.** **1** used when referring to someone or something for the first time in a text or conversation: *a man came out of the room | it has been an honor to have you.* Compare with **THE**. ■ used with units of measurement to mean one such unit: *a hundred | a quarter of an hour.* ■ [with negative] one single; any: *I haven't a thing to wear.* ■ used when mentioning the name of someone not known to the speaker: *a Mr. Smith telephoned.* ■ someone like (the name specified): *you're no better than a Hitler.* **2** used to indicate membership of a class of people or things: *he is a lawyer.* **3** used when expressing rates or ratios; in, to, or for each; per: *typing 60 words a minute.*

USAGE **1** The article **a** can be pronounced either /ə/, when stressed ("He gave you a flower?"—that is, only one flower), or /ə/, when unstressed ("He gave you a flower?"—that is, the emphasis is on flower, not on the number of flowers). The form **an** is used before words beginning with a vowel sound.

2 On the question of using **a** or **an** before words beginning with **h**, see **usage** at **AN**.

a⁻¹ **prefix** not; without: *atheistic | atypical.*
a⁻² **prefix** to; toward: *aside | ashore.* ■ in a specified state or manner: *asleep | aloud.* ■ in the process of (an activity) *a-hunting.* ■ on: *afloat.* ■ in: *nowadays.*

a⁻³ **prefix** variant spelling of **AD-** assimilated before *sc*, *sp*, and *st* (as in *ascend*, *aspire* and *astrigent*).

a⁻⁴ **prefix** **1** of: *anew.* [ORIGIN: from **OF**] **2** utterly: *abash.* [ORIGIN: from Anglo-Norman French, from Latin *ex*.]

-a **suffix** forming: **1** ancient or Latinized modern names of animals and plants: *primula.* **2** names of oxides: *baryta.* **3** geographical names: *Africa.* **4** ancient or Latinized modern feminine forenames: *Lydia.* **5** nouns from Italian, Portuguese and Spanish: *duenna | stianza.*

-a² **suffix** forming plural nouns: **1** from Greek or Latin neuter plurals corresponding to a singular in *-um* or *-on* (such as *addenda*, *phenomena*). **2** in names (often from modern Latin) of zoological groups: *Protista | Insectivora.*

-a³ **suffix** informal **1** of: *coupla.* **2** have: *mighta.* **3** to: *oughta.*

A1 **adj.** informal very good or well; excellent. ■ Nautical (of a vessel) equipped to the highest standard, esp. as certified by a classification society: first-class.

AA **abbr.** ■ Alcoholics Anonymous. ■ anti-aircraft. ■ administrative assistant. ■ Associate of Arts. ■ a dry cell battery size.

aa /'æ, ɑ:/ **n.** Geology basaltic lava forming very rough jagged masses with a light frothy texture. Often contrasted with **PAHOEHOE**.

AAA /'trɪpəl 'a/ **abbr.** American Automobile Association. ■ Baseball see **TRIPLE A.** ■ a 1.5 volt dry cell battery size.

AAAS **abbr.** American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Aachen /'æχən/ **n.** a city in western Germany; pop. 244,440. French name **AIX-LA-CHAPELLE**.

Aalborg /'ɑ:l, bɔ:(g)/ (also **Ålborg**) a city in northern Jutland, Denmark; pop. 155,000.

Aalto /'æltə/, Alvar (1898–1976), Finnish architect and designer; full name *Hugo Alvar Henrik Aalto.* He invented bent plywood furniture.

AAM **abbr.** air-to-air missile.

A&M **abbr.** Agricultural and Mechanical (college)

A&R **abbr.** artist(s) and repertoire.

aardvark /'ɑ:rd, vɑ:rk/ **n.** a nocturnal burrowing African mammal (*Orycteropus afer*, family Orycteropidae) with long ears, a tubular snout, and a long extensible tongue, feeding on ants and termites. Also called **ANT BEAR**.

aard-wolf /'ɑ:rd, wʊlf/ **n.** (pl. **aardwolves** /-, wʊlvz/) a nocturnal black-striped African mammal (*Proteles cristatus*) of the hyena family, feeding mainly on termites.

aargh /ɑ:; ɑ:rg/ **exclam.** used as an expression of anguish, horror, rage, or other strong emotion, often with humorous intent.

Aarhus /'ɑ:ʁ, hʊ:z/ (also **Århus**) a city on the coast of eastern Jutland, Denmark; pop. 261,440.

Aaron ¹ /'erən; 'æ:ɾ-/ (in the Bible) brother of Moses and traditional founder of the Jewish priesthood (see Exod. 28:1).

Aaron ², Hank (1934–), US baseball player; full name *Henry Louis Aaron.* He set the all-time career record of 755 home runs. Baseball Hall of Fame (1982).

AARP /'ɑ:rp/ **abbr.** American Association of Retired Persons.

AAU **abbr.** Amateur Athletic Union.

AB¹ **n.** a human blood type (in the ABO system) containing both the A and B agglutinogens.

AB² **abbr.** ■ able seaman; able-bodied seaman. ■ Bachelor of Arts. ■ airman basic. ■ Baseball at bat. ■ Alberta (in official postal use).

Ab¹ /äb; äv/ (also **Av**) **n.** (in the Jewish calendar) the eleventh month of the civil year and the fifth month of the religious year, usually coinciding with parts of July and August.

Ab² Biology **abbr.** antibody.

ab- (also **abs-**) **prefix** away; from: *abaxial | abominate.*

ABA **abbr.** ■ American Bar Association. ■ American Basketball Association. ■ American Bankers Association. ■ American Book-sellers Association.

abaca /æbə'kɑ:/ **n.** a large herbaceous Philippine plant (*Musa textilis*) of the banana family that yields Manila hemp. ■ Manila hemp.

aback /ə'bæk/ **adv.** **1** archaic toward or situated to the rear. **2** Sailing with the sail pressed backward against the mast by a headwind.

PHRASES **take someone aback** shock or surprise someone.

abacus /'æbəkəs/ **n.** (pl. **abacuses**)

1 an oblong frame with rows of wires or grooves along which beads are slid, used for calculating. **2** Architecture the flat slab on top of a capital, supporting the architrave.

Abadan /æbə'dæn; 'æbə'dæn/ a city in western Iran; pop. 308,000.

Abad-don /ə'bædn/ the Devil (Rev. 9:11); hell.

abaft /ə'bæft/ Nautical **adv.** in or behind the stern of a ship. **prep.** nearer the stern than; behind.

Abakan /æbə'kæn; 'æbə-/ a city in south central Russia, capital of the republic of Khakassia; pop. 154,000. Former name (until 1931) **UST-ĀBAKANSKOE.**

abalone /æbə'ləne; 'æbə,ləne/ **n.** an edible mollusk (genus *Haliotis*, family Haliotidae) of warm seas that has a shallow ear-shaped shell lined with mother-of-pearl and pierced with respiratory holes.

abandon /ə'bændən/ **v.** [trans.] **1** give up completely (a course of action, a practice, or a way of thinking). ■ discontinue (a scheduled event) before completion. **2** cease to support or look after (someone); desert. ■ leave (a place, typically a building) empty or uninhabited, without intending to return. ■ leave (something, typically a vehicle or a vessel) decisively, esp. as an act of survival. ■ (**abandon someone/something to**) condemn someone or something to (a specified fate) by ceasing to take an interest in them. **3** (**abandon oneself to**) allow oneself to indulge in (a desire or impulse). **n.** complete lack of inhibition or restraint. — **abandonment** **n.**

PHRASES **abandon ship** leave a ship because it is sinking.

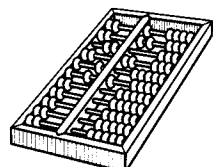
abandoned /ə'bændənd/ **adj.** **1** (of a person) having been deserted or cast off. **2** (of a building or vehicle) remaining empty or unused; having been left for good. **3** unrestrained; uninhibited: *a wild, abandoned dance.*

abase /ə'beɪs/ **v.** [trans.] behave in a way so as to belittle or degrade (someone). — **abatement** **n.**

abash /ə'beɪʃ/ **v.** [trans.] [usu. as adj.] (**abashed**) cause to feel embarrassed, disconcerted, or ashamed. — **abashment** **n.**

abate /ə'beɪt/ **v.** [intrans.] (of something perceived as hostile or negative) become less intense or widespread. ■ [trans.] cause to become smaller or less intense. ■ [trans.] Law lessen, reduce, or remove (esp. a nuisance): *this action would abate the odor nuisance.*

abatement /ə'beɪtmənt/ **n.** (often in legal use) the ending, reduction, or lessening of something.



abacus 1

ab·at·toir /'æbətwaɪr/ **n.** a slaughterhouse.
ab·ax·ial /'æb'æksɪəl/ **adj.** Botany facing away from the stem of a plant (esp. denoting the lower surface of a leaf).
Ab·ba /'äbä/ **n.** (in the New Testament) God. ■ (in the Syrian Orthodox and Coptic churches) a title given to bishops and patriarchs.
ab·bac·y /'æbəsɪ/ **n.** (pl. **-ies**) the office or period of office of an abbot or abbe.
Ab·bas·id /'æbəsɪd/ **adj.** of or relating to a dynasty of caliphs who ruled in Baghdad 750–1258. **n.** a member of this dynasty.
ab·bat·tial /'æbətɪəl/ **adj.** of or relating to an abbey, abbot, or abbe.
ab·bé /'æbɛ/ **n.** (in France) an abbot or other cleric: *the abbé was his confessor* | [as title] *Abbé Pierre*.
ab·bess /'æbɪs/ **n.** a woman who is the head of an abbey of nuns.
Abbe·vill·ian /'æb'vɪliən/ **adj.** (also **Abbevillean**) **adj.** Archaeology, dated of, relating to, or denoting the first Paleolithic culture in Europe. It is now usually referred to as the Lower Acheulean. ■ [as n.] (the **Abbevillean**) the Abbevillean culture or period.
ab·bey /'æbeɪ/ **n.** (pl. **-eys**) the building or buildings occupied by a community of monks or nuns.
ab·bot /'æbət/ **n.** a man who is the head of an abbey of monks.
Ab·bott /'æbət/ Berenice, (1898–1991), US photographer. Her documentation of New York City was published in *Changing New York* (1939).
abbr. **abbr.** abbreviation.
ab·bre·viate /'æbrɪveɪt/ **v.** [trans.] (usu. **be abbreviated**) shorten (a word, phrase, or text).
ab·bre·viation /əbrɪ'veɪʃən/ (abbr.: **abbr.**) **n.** a shortened form of a word or phrase. ■ the process or result of abbreviating.
ABC **n.** the alphabet. ■ (also **ABCs**) the rudiments of a subject. ■ an alphabetical guide: *an ABC of Civil War battlefields*.
PHRASES **easy** (or **simple**) **as ABC** extremely easy or straightforward.
ABC² **abbr.** American Broadcasting Company.
ABD **abbr.** all but dissertation, used to denote a student who has completed all other parts of a doctorate.
ab·di·cate /'æbdɪkət/ **v.** [intrans.] (of a monarch) renounce one's throne: *in 1918 Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated as German emperor* | [trans.] *Ferdinand abdicated the throne in favor of the emperor's brother*. ■ [trans.] fail to fulfill or undertake (a responsibility or duty): *the government was accused of abdicating its responsibility* | [intrans.] *the secretary of state should not abdicate from leadership on educational issues*. — **ab·di·ca·tion** /-'kæʃən/ **n.**
ab·dom·en /'æbdəmən/ **n.** the part of the body of a vertebrate containing the digestive organs; the belly. In mammals it is contained between the diaphragm and the pelvis. ■ Zoology the posterior part of the body of an arthropod, esp. the segments of an insect's body behind the thorax. — **ab·dom·i·nal** /'æbdəmənəl/ **adj.**
ab·duc·ens nerve /'æb'dy(ə)ʊənsnz/ **n.** Anatomy each of the sixth pair of cranial nerves, supplying the muscles concerned with the lateral movement of the eyeballs.
ab·duct /'æbdʌkt/ **v.** [trans.] 1 take (someone) away illegally by force or deception; kidnap. 2 Physiology (of a muscle) move (a limb or part) away from the midline of the body or from another part.
ab·duct·ee /'æbdʌktɪ/ **n.** a person who has been abducted.
ab·duc·tion /'æbdʌkʃən/ **n.** 1 the action or an instance of forcibly taking a person or persons away against their will. ■ (in legal use) the illegal removal from parents or guardians of a child. 2 Physiology the movement of a limb or other part away from the midline of the body, or from another part. The opposite of **adduction** (see **AD·DUCT**).
ab·duc·tor /'æbdʌktər/ **n.** 1 a person who abducts another person. 2 (also **abductor muscle**) Anatomy a muscle whose contraction moves a limb or part away from the midline of the body, or from another part. ■ any of a number of specific muscles in the hand, forearm, or foot: [followed by Latin genitive] *abductor pollicis*.
Ab·dul·Jab·bar /'æbdʊl dʒə'bɑːr/ Kareem, (1947–), US basketball player; former name *Lewis Ferdinand Alcindor*. He played for the Milwaukee Bucks 1960–75 and the Los Angeles Lakers 1975–89.
Ab·dul·lah ibn Hus·sein /'æbdʊl'ä 'ibən hʊ'seɪn/ (1882–1951), king of Jordan 1946–51. He was assassinated in 1951.
Ab·dul Rahman /'æbdʊl 'rɑːmən/; 'rækmən; 'rækmən/ Tunku (1903–90), prime minister of Malaya 1957–63 and of Malaysia 1963–70.
ab·eam /'æbeɪm/ **adv.** on a line at right angles to a ship's or an aircraft's length. ■ (**abeam of**) opposite the middle of (a ship or aircraft): *she was lying almost abeam of us*.
ab·e·ce·dar·ian /'æbeɪ'se'derɪən/ **adj.** 1 arranged alphabetically. 2 rudimentary; elementary. **n.** a person who is just learning; a novice.
ab·bed /'æbed/ **adv.** archaic in bed.
Ab·bel /'æbəl/ (in the Bible) the second son of Adam and Eve, murdered by his brother Cain.
Ab·el² /'æbəl/ Niels Henrik (1802–29), Norwegian mathematician.
Ab·elard /'æbəlɑːd/ Peter (1079–1142), French theologian and

philosopher. He is famous for his tragic love affair with his pupil Héloïse. See also **HÉLOÏSE**.
ab·ele /'æbɛl/ **n.** the white poplar.
Ab·e·li·an /'æbɛliən/ **adj.** Mathematics (of a group) having members related by a commutative operation (i.e., $axb = bxa$).
Ab·e·na·ki /'æbənəkɪ/; 'æbənä-/ **n.** variant spelling of **ABNAKI**.
Ab·e·o·kur·ta /'æbə'ɔːkʊr,tɑː/ a city in southwestern Nigeria, capital of the state of Ogun; pop. 308,800.
Ab·er·deen /'æbər'dɛn/ a city in northeastern Scotland; pop. 201,100.
Ab·er·deen Angus **n.** an animal of a Scottish breed of hornless black beef cattle. Also called **BLACK ANGUS**.
Ab·er·nathy /'æbər,næθɪ/, Ralph David (1926–90), US civil rights activist. He was president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) 1968–1977.
ab·er·rant /'æbərɔːnt/ **adj.** departing from an accepted standard. ■ chiefly Biology diverging from the normal type. — **ab·er·rance** **n.**; **ab·er·rancy** /-nsɪ/ **n.**; **ab·er·rantly** **adv.**
ab·er·ra·tion /'æbər'reɪʃən/ **n.** a departure from what is normal, usual, or expected, typically one that is unwelcome. ■ a person whose beliefs or behavior are unusual or unacceptable. ■ a departure from someone's usual moral character or mental ability, typically for the worse. ■ Biology a characteristic that deviates from the normal type. ■ Optics the failure of rays to converge at one focus because of limitations or defects in a lens or mirror. ■ Astronomy the apparent displacement of a celestial object from its true position, caused by the relative motion of the observer and the object. — **ab·er·ra·tion·al** /-ʃənəl/ **adj.**
Abertawe /'æbər'təw-ɛ/ see **SWANSEA**.
abet /'æbet/ **v.** (**abetted**, **abetting**) [trans.] encourage or assist (someone) to do something wrong, in particular, to commit a crime or other offense. ■ encourage or assist someone to commit (a crime). — **ab·et·ment** **n.**; **ab·et·tor** /'æbetər/ (also **ab·et·ter**) **n.**
ab·ey·ance /'æbeɪns/ **n.** a state of temporary disuse or suspension. ■ Law the position of being without, or waiting for, an owner or claimant. — **ab·ey·ant** /'æbeɪnt/ **adj.**
ab·hor /'æb'hɔːr/ **v.** (**abhorred**, **abhorring**) [trans.] formal regard with disgust and hatred. — **ab·hor·rer** **n.**
ab·hor·rence /'æb'hɔːrəns/; -'hɑːr-/ **n.** a feeling of repulsion; disgusted loathing.
ab·hor·rent /'æb'hɔːrənt/; -'hɑːr-/ **adj.** inspiring disgust and loathing; repugnant.
ab·ide /'æbɪd/ **v.** 1 [intrans.] (**abide by**) accept or act in accordance with (a rule, decision, or recommendation): *I would abide by their decision*. 2 [trans.] (**can/could not abide**) (informal) be unable to tolerate (someone or something): *I cannot abide a lack of discipline*. 3 [intrans.] (of a feeling or a memory) continue without fading or being lost. ■ archaic live; dwell.
ab·id·ing /'æbɪdɪŋ/ **adj.** [attrib.] (of a feeling or a memory) lasting a long time; enduring. — **ab·id·ingly** **adv.**
Ab·i·djan /'æbɪ'dʒɑːn/ the chief port of the Ivory Coast, the capital 1935–83; pop. 1,850,000.
Abi·lene /'æbɪ'lɛn/ 1 a city in east central Kansas; pop. 6,242. It was the first end of the Chisholm Trail. 2 a city in north central Texas; pop. 106,654.
ab·il·ity /'æbɪlɪtɪ/ **n.** (pl. **-ies**) 1 [in sing., with infinitive] the capacity to do something. 2 talent that enables someone to achieve a great deal. ■ (in the context of education) a level of mental power. ■ a special talent or skill.
-ability **suffix** forming nouns of quality corresponding to adjectives ending in **-able** (such as **unsuitability** corresponding to **suitable**).
Ab·ing·ton /'æbɪŋtən/ a township in southeastern Pennsylvania, north of Philadelphia; pop. 56,103.
ab in·iti·o /'æb ɪ'nɪʃɪə, ɔː/ **adv.** from the beginning.
ab·i·o·gen·e·sis /'æbɪ-ɔː'jenəsɪs/ **n.** technical term for **SPONTANEOUS GENERATION**.
ab·i·otic /'æbɪ'ɔːtɪk/ **adj.** physical rather than biological; not derived from living organisms. ■ devoid of life; sterile.
ab·ject /'æb,dʒekt/; 'æb'dʒekt/ **adj.** 1 [attrib.] (of a situation or condition) extremely bad, unpleasant, and degrading. ■ (of an unhappy state of mind) experienced to the maximum degree. ■ (of a failure) absolute and humiliating. 2 (of a person or their behavior) completely without pride or dignity; self-abasing. — **ab·jec·tion** /'æb'dʒekʃən/ **n.**; **ab·jec·tly** **adv.**; **ab·jec·t·ness** **n.**
ab·jure /'æb'dʒʊər/ **v.** [trans.] formal solemnly renounce (a belief, cause, or claim). — **ab·ju·ra·tion** /'æb,dʒə'reɪʃən/ **n.**
Ab·kha·z /'æb'kæz/; 'æb'kæz/ (also **Abkhazian**) /'æb'kæzheɪn/; -zɛn/; 'æb'kæ-/ **adj.** of or relating to Abkhazia, its people, or their language. **n.** 1 a member of a Caucasian people living in Abkhazia. 2 a Northwest Caucasian language.
Ab·kha·zia /'æb'kæzɪə/; 'æb'kæzɪ(ə)ə/ an autonomous territory in northwestern Georgia, on the Black Sea; pop. 537,500; capital, Sokhumi. In 1992, Abkhazia unilaterally declared itself independent, sparking ongoing armed conflict with Georgia.
ab·la·tion /'æbləʃən/ **n.** 1 the surgical removal of body tissue. 2 the removal of snow and ice by melting or evaporation, typically from a glacier or iceberg. ■ the erosion of rock, typically by wind action. ■ the loss of surface material from a spacecraft or meteorite

through evaporation or melting caused by friction with the atmosphere. —**ablate** /ə'blæt/ v.

ablative /'æblə'tiv/ ▶adj. [attrib.] 1 Grammar relating to or denoting a case (esp. in Latin) indicating separation or an agent, instrument, or location. 2 (of surgical treatment) involving ablation. 3 of, relating to, or subject to ablation through melting or evaporation. ▶n. Grammar a word in the ablative case. ■ (the **ablative**) the ablative case.

ablative absolute ▶n. a construction in Latin that consists of a noun and participle or adjective in the ablative case and that is syntactically independent of the rest of the sentence.

ablaut /'æbləwt/ ▶n. a change of vowel in related words or forms, e.g., in Germanic strong verbs (e.g., in *sing, sang, sung*).

ablaze /ə'bləz/ ▶adj. [predic.] burning fiercely. ■ very brightly colored or lighted. ■ made bright by a strong emotion: *eyes ablaze with anger*.

able /'əbl/ ▶adj. (**abler, ablest**) 1 [with infinitive] having the power, skill, means, or opportunity to do something. 2 having considerable skill, proficiency, or intelligence.

-able /ə'bl/ ▶suffix forming adjectives meaning: 1 able to be: *calculable*. 2 due to be: *payable*. 3 subject to: *taxable*. 4 relevant to or in accordance with: *fashionable*. 5 having the quality to: *suitable* | *comfortable*.

able-bodied ▶adj. fit, strong, and healthy; not physically disabled. **able-bodied seaman** ▶n. a merchant seaman qualified to perform all routine duties.

abloom /ə'blu:m/ ▶adj. [predic.] covered in flowers.

ablution /ə'blu:ʃən/ ▶n. (usu. **ablutions**) the act of washing oneself. ■ a ceremonial act of washing parts of the body or sacred containers. —**ablutionary** /-,neri/ adj.

ably /'əbl/ ▶adv. skillfully; competently.

-ably ▶suffix forming adverbs corresponding to adjectives ending in *-able* (such as *suitably* corresponding to *suitable*).

ABM ▶abbr. antiballistic missile.

Abnaki /æb'næki; əb'nə-/ (also **Abenaki** /,æbə'næki; əbə'nə-/) ▶n. (pl. name or **Abnakis**) 1 a member of a North American Indian people of Maine on the Atlantic coast to southern Quebec. 2 either or both of two Algonquian languages, **Eastern Abnaki** and **Western Abnaki**, now nearly extinct. ▶adj. of or relating to this people or their language.

abnegate /'æbni,gæt/ ▶v. [trans.] rare renounce or reject (something desired or valuable). —**abnegator** /-,gætər/ n.

abnegation /,æbni'gæʃən/ ▶n. the act of renouncing or rejecting something. ■ self-denial.

abnormal /æb'nɔ:rməl/ ▶adj. deviating from what is normal or usual, typically in a way that is undesirable. —**abnormally** adv.

abnormality /,æb'nɔ:rmæliti/ ▶n. (pl. **-ies**) an abnormal feature, characteristic, or occurrence. ■ the quality or state of being abnormal.

Aboriginal /'æbɔ:ri'dʒɪnəl/ ▶n. (pl. **Abos**) an Aborigine. ▶adj. Aboriginal.

Åbo /'ɔ:bɔ:/ Swedish name for **TURKU**.

aboard /ə'bɔ:rd/ ▶adv. & prep. on or into (a ship, aircraft, train, or other vehicle): [as adv.] *welcome aboard, sir* | [as prep.] *aboard the yacht*. ■ on or onto (a horse): [as adv.] *with Migliore aboard, he won the cup*. ■ figurative into an organization or team as a new member: [as adv.] *coming aboard as IBM's new chairman*. ■ Baseball on base as a runner: *putting their first batter aboard*.

PHRASES **all aboard!** a call warning passengers to get on a ship, train, or bus that is about to depart.

abode /ə'bɔ:d/ ▶n. formal or poetic/literary a place of residence; a house or home. ■ archaic a stay; a sojourn.

abode ▶v. archaic past of **ABIDE**.

abolish /ə'bɔ:lɪʃ/ ▶v. [trans.] formally put an end to (a system, practice, or institution). —**abolisher** n.; **abolishment** n.

abolition /,æbɔ:lɪʃən/ ▶n. the action or an act of abolishing a system, practice, or institution.

abolitionist /,æbɔ:lɪʃənɪst/ ▶n. a person who favors the abolition of a practice or institution, esp. capital punishment or (formerly) slavery. —**abolitionism** n.

abomasum /,æbə'mæsəm/ ▶n. (pl. **abomasas** /-sə/) Zoology the fourth stomach of a ruminant, which receives food from the omasum and passes it to the small intestine.

A-bomb ▶n. short for **ATOM BOMB**.

Abomey /,æbə'meɪ; ə'bɔ:mɛ/ a town in southern Benin; pop. 54,400.

abominable /ə'bɔ:mɪnə'bl/ ▶adj. causing moral revulsion. ■ informal very unpleasant. —**abominably** /-blɛ/ adv.

Abominable Snowman ▶n. (pl. **-men**) another term for **YETI**.

abominate /ə'bɔ:mɪnət/ ▶v. [trans.] formal detest; loathe. —**abominator** /-,nətər/ n.

abomination /,æbɔ:mɪ'næʃən/ ▶n. a thing that causes disgust or hatred. ■ a feeling of hatred.

aboral /æb'ɔ:rəl/ ▶adj. Zoology relating to or denoting the side or end that is furthest from the mouth. ■ moving or leading away from the mouth. —**aborally** adv.

aboriginal /,æbə'ri:dʒɪnəl/ ▶adj. inhabiting or existing in a land from the earliest times; indigenous. ■ (**Aboriginal**) of or relating to

the Australian Aboriginals or their languages. ▶n. an aboriginal inhabitant of a place. ■ (**Aboriginal**) a person belonging to one of the indigenous peoples of Australia.

USAGE **Aboriginals** (rather than **Aborigines**) is the standard plural form when referring to Australian Aboriginal peoples.

aborigine /,æbə'ri:dʒɪnəl/ ▶n. a person, animal, or plant that has been in a country or region from earliest times. ■ (**Aborigine**) an aboriginal inhabitant of Australia.

USAGE See **usage** at **ABORIGINAL**.

aborn /ə'bɔ:rnɪŋ/ ▶adv. while being born or produced. ▶adj. [predic.] being born or produced.

abort /ə'bɔ:rt/ ▶v. [trans.] 1 carry out or undergo the abortion of (a fetus). ■ [intrans.] (of a pregnant woman or female animal) have a miscarriage. ■ [intrans.] Biology (of an embryonic organ or organism) remain undeveloped. 2 bring to a premature end because of a problem or fault. ▶n. informal or technical an act of aborting a flight, space mission, or other enterprise: *there was an abort because of bad weather*.

abortifacient /,ə'bɔ:rtə'fæʃənt/ ▶n. Medicine ▶adj. (chiefly of a drug) causing abortion. ▶n. an abortifacient drug.

abortion /ə'bɔ:rtʃən/ ▶n. 1 the deliberate termination of a human pregnancy. ■ a miscarriage. ■ Biology the arrest of the development of an organ, typically a seed or fruit. 2 an object or undertaking regarded as unpleasant or badly made or carried out.

abortionist /,ə'bɔ:rtʃənɪst/ ▶n. a person who carries out abortions, esp. illegally.

abortion pill ▶n. informal a drug that can induce abortion, esp. mifepristone.

abortive /ə'bɔ:rtɪv/ ▶adj. 1 failing to produce the intended result. 2 Biology, dated (of an organ or organism) rudimentary; arrested in development. ■ Medicine (of a virus infection) failing to produce symptoms. 3 [attrib.] rare causing or resulting in abortion. —**abortively** adv.

ABO system ▶n. a system of four basic types (A, AB, B, and O) into which human blood may be classified, based on the presence or absence of certain inherited antigens.

Abou-Ilfa /ə'bʊ:leɪfə/ ▶n. variant spelling of **ABULIA**.

abound /ə'baʊnd/ ▶v. [intrans.] exist in large numbers or amounts. ■ (**abound in/with**) have in large numbers or amounts.

about /ə'baʊt/ ▶prep. 1 on the subject of; concerning: *I was thinking about you*. ■ so as to affect: *there's nothing we can do about it*. ■ (**be about**) be involved or to do with; have the intention of: *it's all about having fun*. 2 used to indicate movement within a particular area: *she looked about the room*. 3 used to express location in a particular place: *rugs strewn about the hall*. ■ used to describe a quality apparent in a person: *there was a look about her that said everything*. ▶adv. 1 used to indicate movement in an area: *finding my way about*. 2 used to express location in a particular place: *there was a lot of flu about*. 3 (used with a number or quantity) approximately: *he's about 35*.

PHRASES **about to do something** intending to do something or close to doing something very soon. **be not about to do something** be unwilling to do something. **how about** see **HOW?**. **just about** see **JUST**. **know what one is about** informal be aware of the implications of one's actions or of a situation, and of how best to deal with them. **up and about** see **UP**. **what about** see **WHAT?**

about-face ▶n. (chiefly in military contexts) a turn made so as to face the opposite direction. ■ informal a complete change of opinion or policy. ▶v. [intrans.] turn so as to face the opposite direction.

exclam. (about face!) (in military contexts) a command to make an about-face.

above /ə'boʊv/ ▶prep. 1 in extended space over and not touching: *a display of fireworks above the town*. ■ extending upward over: *her arms above her head*. ■ higher than and to one side of; overlooking: *on the wall above the altar*. 2 at a higher level or layer than: *bruises above both eyes*. ■ higher in grade or rank than: *at a level above the common people*. ■ considered of higher status or worth than; too good for: *above reproach*. ■ in preference to: *they chose profit above safety*. ■ at a higher volume or pitch than: *above a whisper*. 3 higher than (a specified amount, rate, or norm): *above average*.

▶adv. at a higher level or layer: *place a quantity of mud in a jar with water above*. ■ higher in grade or rank: *an officer of the rank of superintendent or above*. ■ higher than a specified amount, rate, or norm: *boats of 31 ft. or above*.

PHRASES **above all (else)** more so than anything else. **above oneself** conceited; arrogant. **from above** from overhead. ■ from a position of higher rank or authority. **not be above** be capable of stooping to (an unworthy act). **over and above** see **OVER**.

above-board /ə'boʊv,bɔ:rd/ ▶adj. legitimate, honest, and open. ▶adv. legitimately, honestly, and openly: *the accountants acted completely aboveboard*.

ab ovo /æb'ɔ:və; əb-/ ▶adv. from the very beginning.

abracadabra /,æbrə'kæ'dæbrə/ ▶exclam. a word said by magicians when performing a magic trick. ▶n. informal the implausibly easy achievement of difficult feats. ■ language, typically in the form

of gibberish, used to give the impression of arcane knowledge or power.

abrade /ə'brɑ:d/ *v.* [trans.] scrape or wear away by friction or erosion. — **abraded** *n.*

Abraham /'Abrɑ:hɑ:m/ (in the Bible) the Hebrew patriarch from whom all Jews trace their descent (Gen. 11:27–25:10).

Abraham, Plains of see **PLAINS OF ABRAHAM.**

abrasion /ə'bræʒən/ *n.* the process of scraping or wearing away. ■ an area damaged by scraping or wearing away.

abrasive /ə'bræsiv/ *ziv/* *adj.* (of a substance or material) capable of polishing or cleaning a hard surface by rubbing or grinding. ■ tending to rub or graze the skin. ■ figurative (of sounds or music) rough to the ear; harsh. ■ figurative (of a person or manner) showing little concern for the feelings of others; harsh. *n.* a substance used for grinding, polishing, or cleaning a hard surface.

abreact /,æbre'ækt/ *v.* [trans.] Psychology release (an emotion) by abreaction. ■ cause (someone) to undergo abreaction.

abreaction /,æbre'ækʃən/ *n.* Psychology the expression and consequent release of a previously repressed emotion, achieved through reliving the experience that caused it (typically through hypnosis or suggestion). — **abreactive** /-tiv/ *adj.*

abreast /ə'breɪst/ *adv.* 1 side by side and facing the same way: *they were riding three abreast.* 2 alongside or even with something. ■ figurative up to date with the latest news, ideas, or information.

abridge /ə'brɪdʒ/ *v.* [trans.] (usu. **be abridged**) 1 shorten (a book, movie, speech, or other text) without losing the sense. 2 Law curtail (rights or privileges). — **abridged** *n.*

abridgment /ə'brɪdʒmənt/ (also **abridgement**) *n.* 1 a shortened version of a larger work. 2 Law a curtailment of rights.

abroad /ə'brɔ:d/ *adv.* 1 in or to a foreign country or countries. ■ dated or humorous out of doors: *few people ventured abroad from their warm houses.* 2 in different directions; over a wide area. ■ (of a feeling or rumor) widely current. ■ freely moving about. 3 archaic wide of the mark; in error. *n.* foreign countries considered collectively.

abrogate /ə'brɔ:gət/ *v.* [trans.] formal repeal or do away with (a law, right, or formal agreement). — **abrogation** /,æbrɔ:'gæʃən/ *n.*

USAGE The verbs **abrogate** and **arrogate** are quite different in meaning. While **abrogate** means 'repeal (a law),' **arrogate** means 'take or claim (something for oneself) without justification,' often in the structure *arrogate something to oneself, as in the emergency committee arrogated to itself whatever powers it chose.*

abrupt /ə'brʌpt/ *adj.* 1 sudden and unexpected. 2 brief to the point of rudeness; curt. ■ (of a style of speech or writing) not flowing smoothly; disjointed. 3 steep; precipitous. — **abruptly** *adv.* **abruptness** *n.*

abruption /ə'brʌpʃən/ *n.* technical the sudden breaking away of a portion from a mass. ■ (also **placental abruption**) Medicine separation of the placenta from the wall of the uterus.

ABS *abbr.* ■ acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene, a composite plastic used to make car bodies and cases for computers and other appliances. ■ anti-lock braking system (for motor vehicles).

abs /æbz/ *informal n.* the abdominal muscles.

abs- *prefix* variant spelling of **ab-** before *c, q,* and *t* (as in *abscond, abstain*).

absciss /'æb,ses/ *n.* a swollen area within body tissue, containing an accumulation of pus.

abscise /'æb,stɪz/ *v.* [trans.] cut off or away. ■ [intrans.] Botany separate by abscission; fall off.

abscissae /'æb'sɪsə/ *n.* (pl. **abscissae** /-'sɪsə/ or **abscissas**) Mathematics (in a system of coordinates) the x-coordinate, the distance from a point to the vertical or y-axis measured parallel to the horizontal or x-axis. Compare with **ORDINATE.**

abscission /'æb'sɪʒən/ *n.* Botany the natural detachment of parts of a plant, typically dead leaves and ripe fruit. ■ any act of cutting off.

abscund /'æb'skʌnd/ *v.* [intrans.] leave hurriedly and secretly, typically to avoid detection or arrest. ■ (of someone on bail) fail to surrender oneself for custody at the appointed time. ■ (of a person kept in detention or under supervision) escape. — **abscunder** *n.*

abself /'æpsɪl/ *n. & v.* another term for **RAPPEL.** — **abselfer** *n.*

absence /'æbsəns/ *n.* the state of being away from a place or person. ■ an occasion or period of being away from a place or person. ■ (**absence of**) the nonexistence or lack of.

absent *adj.* /'æbsənt/ 1 not present in a place or at an occasion. ■ (of a part or feature of the body) not forming part of a creature in which it might be expected. 2 (of an expression or manner) showing that someone is not paying attention to what is being said or done: *an absent smile.* *v.* /'æbsənt/ (**absent oneself**) stay or go away. *prep.* /'æbsənt/ formal without: *employees could not be fired absent other evidence.* — **absently** *adv.* (in sense 2).

absentee /'æbsən'ti/ *n.* a person who is expected or required to be present at a place or event but is not.

absentee ballot *n.* a ballot completed and mailed before an election by a voter unable to be present at the polls.

absenteeism /'æbsən'ti:zəm/ *n.* the practice of regularly staying away from work or school without good reason.

absent-minded /'æbsənt,mɪndɪd/ *adj.* (of a person or a per-

son's behavior or manner) having or showing a habitually forgetful or inattentive disposition. — **absent-mindedly** *adv.* **absent-mindedness** *n.*

absinthe /'æbsɪnθɪ/ (also **absinth**) *n.* 1 the shrub wormwood. ■ an essence made from this. 2 a potent green aniseed-flavored liqueur prepared from wormwood, now largely banned because of its toxicity.

absolute /'æbsə,lʊt; ,æbsə'lʊt/ *adj.* 1 not qualified or diminished in any way; total: *absolute secrecy.* ■ used for general emphasis when expressing an opinion: *the policy is absolute folly.* ■ (of powers or rights) not subject to any limitation; unconditional: *absolute authority* ■ (of a ruler) having unrestricted power: *absolute monarch.* ■ Law (of a decree) final: *the decree of nullity was made absolute.* 2 viewed or existing independently and not in relation to other things. ■ Grammar (of a construction) syntactically independent of the rest of the sentence, as in *dinner being over, we left the table.* ■ Grammar (of a transitive verb) used without an expressed object (e.g., *guns kill*). ■ Grammar (of an adjective) used without an expressed noun (e.g., *the brave*). *n.* Philosophy a value or principle regarded as universally valid or viewed without relation to other things. ■ (**the absolute**) Philosophy that which exists without being dependent on anything else. ■ (**the absolute**) Theology ultimate reality; God. — **absoluteness** *n.* **absolutize** /'æbsə'lʊtɪz/ *v.*

absolutely /,æbsə'lʊtli/ *adv.* 1 with no qualification, restriction, or limitation; totally. ■ used to emphasize the truth or appropriateness of a very strong or exaggerated statement: *he absolutely adores that car.* ■ [with negative] none whatsoever: *she had absolutely no idea what he was talking about.* ■ [as exclam.] informal used to express and emphasize one's assent. 2 independently; not viewed in relation to other things or factors: *white-collar crime increased both absolutely and in comparison with other categories.* ■ Grammar (of a verb) without a stated object.

absolute magnitude *n.* Astronomy the magnitude (brightness) of a celestial object as it would be seen at a standard distance of 10 parsecs. Compare with **APPARENT MAGNITUDE.**

absolute majority *n.* a majority over all rivals combined; more than half.

absolute music *n.* instrumental music composed purely as music, and not intended to represent or illustrate something else. Compare with **PROGRAM MUSIC.**

absolute pitch *n.* Music the ability to recognize the pitch of a note or produce any given note; perfect pitch. ■ pitch according to a fixed standard defined by the frequency of the sound vibration.

absolute temperature *n.* a temperature measured from absolute zero in kelvins. (Symbol: T)

absolute value *n.* 1 Mathematics the magnitude of a real number without regard to its sign. The absolute value of a complex number $a^2 + ib$ is the positive square root of $a^2 + b^2$. Also called **MODULUS.** 2 technical the actual magnitude of a numerical value, irrespective of its relation to other values.

absolute zero *n.* the lowest temperature theoretically possible, at which the motion of particles that constitutes heat would be minimal. It is zero on the Kelvin scale (−273.15°C or −459.67°F).

absolution /,æbsə'lʊʃən/ *n.* formal release from guilt, obligation, or punishment. ■ an ecclesiastical declaration of forgiveness of sins.

absolutism /'æbsə'lʊtɪzəm/ *n.* the acceptance of or belief in absolute principles in political, philosophical, ethical, or theological matters. — **absolutist** *n. & adj.*

absolve /'æbzɔ:lv; -'zɔlv; -'sɔlv; -'sɔlv/ *v.* [trans.] declare (someone) free from blame, guilt, or responsibility. ■ Christian Theology give absolution for (a sin).

absorb /'æbzɔ:rb; -'sɔrb/ *v.* [trans.] 1 take in or soak up (energy, or a liquid or other substance) by chemical or physical action, typically gradually. ■ take in and assimilate (information, ideas, or experience). ■ take control of (a smaller or less powerful entity), making it a part of oneself by assimilation. ■ use or take up (time or resources): *he claims that arms spending absorbs 2 percent of the national income.* ■ take up and reduce the effect or intensity of (sound or an impact). 2 engross the attention of (someone). — **absorbability** /'æbzɔ:rbə'bɪlɪte; -'sɔr- *n.* **absorbable** *adj.* **absorbent** *n.*

absorbance /'æbzɔ:rbəns; -'sɔr- *n.* Physics a measure of the capacity of a substance to absorb light of a specified wavelength.

absorbed /'æbzɔ:rbd; -'sɔrbd/ *adj.* [predic.] intensely engaged; engrossed. — **absorbedly** /-bɪdlɪ/ *adv.*

absorbed dose *n.* Physics the energy of ionizing radiation absorbed per unit mass by a body.

absorbent /'æbzɔ:rbənt; -'sɔr- *adj.* (of a material) able to soak up liquid easily. *n.* a substance or item that soaks up liquid easily. — **absorbency** *n.*

absorbent cotton *n.* fluffy wadding of a kind originally made from raw cotton, used for cleansing wounds, removing cosmetics, etc.

absorbing /'æbzɔ:rbɪŋ; -'sɔr- *adj.* intensely interesting: *an absorbing account of their marriage.* — **absorbingly** *adv.*

absorption /'æbzɔ:rbɪʃən; -'sɔrp- *n.* 1 the process or action by which one thing absorbs or is absorbed by another: *shock absorp-*