

英语小词集锦

江梅华 马列义 编著

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前言

英语是一种兼容并蓄的语言，只要有用，任何一种其他的语言它都能“顺手牵羊”为其所用。英语的这种特性使它成为世界上词汇量最大、含义最丰富的语言，很多人因此对英语望而生畏。其实学英语最难掌握的不是那些又长又难的“大词”（big word）。新西兰英语词典编纂者、语言学家 Ian.Gordon 专门论及英语小词（small word）时说道：“The English big words are the easiest. If you don't know their meaning, look them up in the dictionary and there it is. The small words, on the other hand, often have many possible meanings. Correct interpretation depends on the circumstances.”（英语“大词”是最容易的，如果你不懂它们的意思，只需在字典里查一下，就可以找到。而小词则相反，常常有很多种意思。正确的诠释必须依靠语言环境。）（WE 1/1995, p26. L1~L7）。就拿 electroencephalography 这个单词来说，它有 22 个字母，8 个音节，看似复杂，把它“解剖”一下，便能化难为易：electroen——电的；cephala——脑的；graphy——写，合起来便是“脑电图记录”。只要掌握了英语构词法，记住它并不难。而一些结构短小、意义多变的“小词”（small word）才是最难掌握的，这些词才是英语语言的核心（core），在阅读中必须在它们的基本意义之外去体会其“弦外之音”，而不能望文生义。如：“Why don't you take a bus home?” “Because it is too big.”这一问一答之间的玄妙之处，不懂英语的人是很难体会的（这是一个双关语：take a bus home 即可理解为“坐公共汽车回家”，也可理解为“把一辆公共汽车带回家”）。本书收集了常用的英语小词 344 个，词条 6583 条，每个小词都配备了

相应的练习，从文化背景、词语起源、本义、引申义及逸闻趣事等方面作了大量介绍。有很多新词尚未收入本书中，如“new bee”（电脑新手），读来意趣盎然，集知识性、实用性、趣味性于一体，是每个英语学习者和使用者的好帮手。即使是不懂英语的人也能从中获取有关英语文化背景知识，增长见识。

在本书的撰写过程中，我们参考了大量的词典、英语报纸杂志等资料，这里不一一赘述。同时还得到了陈兴、朱发仁、戴桂祥、龙建华、杨丽华、伍娟娟、邵祖权、彭国教、袁菊文、郑静、郭丽及外语系全体教师的大力帮助和支持，在此表示衷心的感谢。尤其要感谢的是我们的老师张文达先生，这本小书的成功完成离不开先生的教诲。由于我们造诣不深，加上时间仓促，难免有诸多错误，烦请读者指教。

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2006 年 9 月 28 日

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A

ABC

学英语首先要从 ABC 开始 (start with ABC), 也就是从最基本的开始。那么学英语难吗? It's as easy as ABC. 简单之极。只要你坚持每天读一段文章, 记几个单词, 一年下来就能“know A from Z” (区别 A 和 Z: 识字, 有文化) 了。事情就这么简单!

Related Expressions:

1. a straight/top A: 最好的, 顶呱呱的。2. A-Ok: 一流的。3. A and R man: 节目组织者/主持人/策划人。4. feel A: 感觉很好。

Practice:

1. Everybody should know some ABC about first aid.
2. He is an ABC.
3. He worked very hard, but got A for effort and B for effect.
4. I know it from A to Z.
5. Though they are lovers, they adopt the AA system when they eat out.
6. I don't care if the bus can take me from A to B.

Act

俗话说“天作孽, 犹自可; 自作孽, 不可活。”“天作孽”相当于“Act of God” (天灾), 如旱涝、地震、台风、海啸等。而这些天灾多是人类自己造的孽: 温室气体, 温室效应, 植被破坏, 土

地沙漠化……人类一天不停止对大自然的破坏和掠夺, “Act of God” 就会加倍地降临到人类头上。

Related Expressions:

1. act in cold blood: 蓄意行动, 预谋。2. act in hot blood: 愤怒的行动; 冲动的行动。3. crab sb.'s act: 干涉某人; 扫某人的兴。
4. tough/hard act: 绝技, 无法与之媲美的人。

Practice:

1. Don't put on an act, we know who you are.
2. Jack always gets into the act.
3. So we should put our act together to stop him.
4. This medicine can act like charm.
5. His father often reads riot act to him.

Adam

请读下面这句话: Madam, I'm Adam. 这是 Adam 在伊甸园见到 Eve 时的自我介绍。如果将这句话从后往前念, 你会有一个意外的发现。※

Related Expressions:

1. as old as Adam: 极其古老的, 非常旧的。2. Adam's fig: 无花果。3. Adam's needle: 一种兰花。4. faithful Adam: 忠义老仆人。

Practice:

1. He touched his Adam's apple and told the doctor it hurt badly.
2. I don't know him from Adam.
3. It happened since Adam was a boy.
4. We had some Adam's ale and Adam and Eve on a raft for breakfast.

Age

西方人到了“the age of consent”的时候，如果有了意中人，就可以结婚了。一般他们都要到教堂里由神父问新娘/新郎一些问题：“你愿意娶这个女子为妻/你愿意嫁给这个男子为妻”、“无论好坏”(for better or worse)等，新郎新娘会回答：“是的，我愿意。”

(Yes, I do) 所以“the age of consent”是说一个人已到了说“同意”的年龄即结婚的年龄了。在婚礼上新娘要穿“something old something new, something borrowed something blue”。还要由新娘的父亲挽着女儿走向神坛，叫做“walk down the aisle”，把女儿亲手交给新郎。没有父亲的女子则由她亲近信赖的年长异性代替。在9·11事件中，不少美国消防员献出了生命，其中一位消防员的女儿婚礼在即，他却再也不能出席女儿的婚礼了。当时的纽约市长朱利安尼后来代替他“walked the bride down the aisle”，那场面让无数人热泪盈眶。

Related Expressions:

1. age before beauty: (恭维年长者)年龄比相貌重要。2. awkward age: “愣头青”年龄。3. bear one's age well: 不显老。4. from age to age: 世代代。5. green old age: 老当益壮。

Practice:

1. I always remember my tender age. How happy I was then!
2. You are old enough to act your age.
3. The age of miracles is past.

Air

Air 在英语中除空气外还有很多其他含义和用法，如“in the air”就表示“在空中”。与汉语“空中楼阁”相对应的英语是“a castle

in the air”，亦作“a castle in Spain”。因为西班牙风景美丽迷人，人们认为在那儿修建楼阁、生活在其中是很美妙的事，后转为现义。

Related Expressions:

1. a hang-dog air: 垂头丧气；自觉有罪的神情。2. disappear in the thin air: 化为乌有，不知去向。3. fish/plough in the air: 白费力气，竹篮打水，徒劳。4. give somebody the air: 辞退/解雇某人；不睬某人；与某人断交。5. go up in the air: 生气，愤怒。6. hot air: 吹牛，夸口。7. keep somebody in the air: 使某人无着落/进退两难。8. take air: 传播，宣扬。take the air: 散步，呼吸新鲜空气。9. walk on air: 洋洋得意。

Practice:

1. Don't beat the air. You should do some down-to-earth work.
2. Mary always eats the air.
3. That guy likes putting on airs.
4. I can't sing an air to save my life.
5. John likes to saw the air when he speaks.

All

All is well that ends well.

向往光明美好是人的本性，世界上所有的民族都希望凡事都有一个美好的结局，英国人也一样。上面这句话的意思是“结局好一切都好”，又可译为：“皆大欢喜”。

Related Expressions:

1. all adrift: 漂浮/流；茫然若失，不知所措。2. all hat, no cattle: 摆阔，装门面，死要面子，华而不实（在美国西部农场，牛是财富的象征，牛仔帽是牛仔的标志。有的人一头牛也没有，却也要

在房外墙上挂满牛仔帽来充门面，故有此说)。3. all square: 两清，彼此不欠了；平局；很好，满意。4. all the go: 大流行。5. all things to all man: 用不同的方法与不同的人打交道；善于周旋，八面玲珑，阿谀奉承。6. be-all and end-all: 最重要的部分。7. sweet all: 什么都没有，一点都没有。

Practice:

1. I have to pull on all-nighter to prepare for the exam.
2. She is all in all to her parents.
3. What you said is all abroad to me.
4. When all comes to all, there is no remedy to cure an earthquake.

Angel

撒旦 (Satan) 是《圣经》中的恶魔，可他是由天使变成的。他因反抗上帝的权威而被贬为魔鬼。这种说法的用意在于告诫人们：从天使到恶魔只有一步之遥。

Related Expressions:

1. angel food: 传导者的说教；宗教。2. entertain angels unawares: 无意中招待贵客；对身边朝夕相处的人的优点视而不见。3. fallen angel: 堕落的天使；恶魔。4. join the angels: 升天；死。5. on the side of the angels: 站在好的/善的一边。

Practice:

1. Don't rush in where angels fear to tread.
2. His story is sad enough to make the angels weep.
3. Here he is. Talk about an angel and you'll hear his wings.

Ape

根据达尔文的“进化论”，猴子是人类的祖先(ancestor)，猿猴

则是人类的亲戚 (cousin)。可我们的这位表亲真是不争气，不管怎么训练它，它总也不会说人话，不会像人一样思维和行事。就算有名的“人猿泰山”(Tarzan) 还是一个人。会来事的好莱坞拍的动画片 Tarzan 不但场景宏大，画面优美，情节更是感人，将一段虚构的人与猿(黑猩猩)之间的故事演得情意深长。而一曲“You'll be in my heart”更是打动了无数人的心。世界流行乐坛顶尖级歌手 Phil Collins 在为之写曲配唱时想到自己年幼的小女儿，心中充满柔情，写出的歌那么动人就不足为奇了。当你聆听他款款深情的演唱时，你会觉得这世界是如此的美好……

Related Expressions:

1. a hairy ape: 退化的人。2. ape drunk: 烂醉如泥。3. go ape over/for sb./sth.: 迷上/爱上/热衷于某人/某物。4. God's ape: 白痴。5. Make sb. one's ape: 愚弄/欺骗某人。6. play the sedulous ape: 模仿他人风格，依样画葫芦。

Practice:

1. Don't play the ape. You can do something more original.
2. The higher the ape goes, the more he shows his tail.
3. You can't put an ape in my hood. I know what you mean.

Apple

苹果也许是人类最早认识和食用的水果，Adam 和 Eve 在伊甸园里吃的禁果应该就是苹果。据说 Adam 在吃禁果时，上帝为了惩罚他让禁果的核卡在他的喉咙里变成了喉结 (Adam's apple)。禁果当是苹果无疑。

苹果不仅味美，更有丰富的营养，因而深为人们所喜爱，多吃可以预防疾病。One apple a day, keep the doctor away. (一天一个苹果，医生不来找我。)

Related Expressions:

1. apple and orange: 风马牛不相及的事物(古代欧洲人将一切水果都叫做 apple, 后来才分类)。2. apple knocker: 苹果采摘工; 无知识的人。3. apple of discord: 祸根。(古希腊神话: 三女神比美, 最美者可得到金苹果, 结果谁也没得到。被斯巴达王的王后 Helen 得到, 因为她最美。后被希腊王子诱拐, 导致特洛伊战争, 故有此说。)4. apple of one's eye: 掌上明珠, 珍贵的物品。5. apple sauce: 胡说。6. as sure as god made little apple: 确定无疑。7. Dead Sea apple: (apple of Sodom) 外表华丽、内部腐烂的苹果; 中看不中用的人或物; 金玉其外败絮其中。8. from egg to the apple: 从头至尾, 自始至终。9. rotten apple: 败家子; 败类。

Practice:

1. A bad apple injures its neighbor.
 2. An apple doesn't fall far from the tree.
 3. Don't upset my apple cart, will you?
 4. I don't like Lisa, She is an apple-polisher.
 5. That's an apple of another tree.
 6. We can't throw away the apple because of the core.
- A riddle: Which is the biggest apple in the world? ※

Arm

arm 是手臂, 它的复数形式是“武器”。中文的“武装到牙齿”就是英语“armed to teeth”的直译。美国作家 Earnest Hemingway 写过一部小说, A Farewell to Arms(《告别武器》), 对 Hemingway 大家并不陌生, “The old Man and the Sea”(《老人与海》)就出自他之手。他也正因为这部描写人与自然抗争的杰作获得诺贝尔文学奖。Hemingway 在美国及世界文坛上都享有极高声誉, 他喜欢

被人称为“爸爸”(Papa)。他在写给爱因斯坦的信中都如此称呼自己。后者则在回信中幽默地说看不出他们之间有什么亲戚关系。至今美国都有每年一度的“海明威模仿秀”, 其魅力可见一斑。

Related Expressions:

1. a right arm: 艰难困苦中的得力助手(左肱右股)。2. at arm's length: 与某人保持距离, 避免与某人接近。3. chance one's arm: 冒险一试, 碰运气。4. make a long arm: 努力获得。5. put the arm on sb.: 向某人要钱; 抢劫某人。6. shorten sb.'s arm: 限制某人的力量。7. throw down one's arms: 放下武器, 投降。8. the long arm of coincidence: 纯粹的偶然性。9. talk sb.'s arm off: 唠叨不休。10. under arms: 武装备战, 参军。11. under the arm: 质量低劣的。12. work at arm's length: 在不利的条件下工作。

Practice:

1. Don't fold your arms. Do your share.
2. That car cost me an arm and a leg.
3. He is old enough to earn his own bread. But he still often twists his parents' arm for money.

Ass

一位教授在黑板上写下一句话通知他的学生:

The professor will meet his class tomorrow.

一位顽皮的学生将“class”擦去一个“c”: The professor will meet his lass(情人, 小姑娘) tomorrow. 教授见了有些生气, 便将“lass”擦去一个“l”: The professor will meet his ass tomorrow.

Ass 在英语中除了驴子外还有“笨蛋, 傻瓜”之意, 这句话至此已变得面目全非, 而且只有两个字母的改变, 语言是多么奇妙的东西!

Related Expressions:

1. ass kisser: 马屁精。2. act/play the ass: 做糊涂事, 胡闹。
3. be an ass for one's pains: 徒劳无功, 枉费心机。4. break/bust one's sweet ass: 拼命干。5. chew sb.'s ass (out): 申斥某人。6. make an ass of oneself: 使自己出丑, 出洋相。7. make an ass of sb.: 愚弄某人。
8. sell one's ass: 别再做蠢事/说傻话。9. stick sth./it up one's ass: 不关某人屁事。10. work one's ass off: 拼命做某事。11. work the ass off sb.: 使某人拼命做某事。

Practice:

1. All asses wag their ears.
2. He is an ass in a lion's skin.

B

Baby

第二次世界大战之后的十余年里, 美国出现了一个新词: baby boom, 汉译为“婴儿潮”。战争结束, 人们安居乐业, 有空生孩子了, 一大批婴儿降临人间, 被称为“baby boomer”。在 1992 年的美国总统竞选中, Bill Clinton 击败现任美国总统 W•Bush 的父亲、当时的美国总统 W•Bush(Sr Bush) 入主白宫, 被认为具有划时代的意义——婴儿潮一代终于掌管了国家大权, 成了世界上最强大国家的主宰者。“baby boomers”如今已步入老年, 成了众多商家的抢手货——银发族。

Related Expressions:

1. baby farmer: 代人生育婴儿者。2. baby kisser: 哗众取宠, 为竞选笼络人心的政客。3. cry baby: 哭哭啼啼喜欢抱怨的人。
4. look babies in somebody's eyes: 含情脉脉地望着某人。5. play the baby: 像小孩一样行动说话。6. take candy from a baby: 轻易地做某事, 轻而易举, 不费吹灰之力。

Practice:

1. He is a baby boomerang.
2. My brother Sam is very sly. Whenever he does anything wrong, I'm always the one to carry the baby for him.
3. We can't believe him. He is kissing the baby for the nurse's sake.

4. You are sending a baby on an errand if you let John do the work.

Back

Nimby.

这个词的汉译非常传神，既照顾了读音，又不失去它的英文含义：“您别”。全称是“Not in my back yard” (别在我的后院)，意为反对在自己居住的社区附近修建危险工厂、收容所或设立任何其他令人不愉快的工程。试想你家旁边就是一个核电站，你会感到安全吗？所以请您千万别：您别——Nimby!

Related Expressions:

1. at sb.'s back: 支持某人，和某人站在一边。2. back and belly: 背与腹；衣食，生计。3. back and fill: 进退两难，举棋不定，出尔反尔。4. back channel: 秘密渠道，非正规途径。5. backstair influence: 幕后交易，秘密勾结；走后门，托门子。6. back to square one: 重新从头做起；前功尽弃。7. be on sb's back: 嘲笑/斥责某人。8. break sb.'s back: (工作/任务等) 压得人喘不过气来。9. break the back of sth.: 完成(某事中)最困难的部分。10. crouch one's back before sb.: 向某人折腰屈膝。11. cast sth. behind one's back: 将某事置之脑后。12. get on one's back: 唠叨个没完。13. get one's back at sb.: 向某人报复。14. get sb.'s back: 掩护、支持某人。15. get/have/set sb.'s back up: 使某人发怒。16. get the back of sth.: 彻底弄清某事的真相或本质。17. give sb. the back of one's hand: 训斥某人。18. have a broad back: 愿为他人的错误承担责任。19. have sb. on one's back: 受某人攻击/责难；挑剔/嘲笑某人；成为某人的负担。20. make rod for one's own back: 自讨苦吃，自找麻烦。21. on the back of an envelope: 粗略/草草完成的。22. put one's back into sth.:

发奋/埋头做某事。23. pat sb. on the back: 赞扬某人。24. raise sb.'s/ one's back against: 不接受，固执，反对。25. stab sb. in the back: 暗箭伤人。26. turn one's back on: 轻视；背叛。

Practice:

1. Get off my back! I'm glad to see your back.
2. He got in by the back door.
3. Mind your back!
4. The boxer sold his back in the match.
5. What's the back of it?

Bad

如果有人对你说“you are so bad”，你一定会勃然大怒：你凭什么说我坏？我又没惹你。其实你大可不必大动肝火，别人并没有说你坏，而是在称赞你。查一查字典你就会知道 bad 除了“坏”的意思之外，还有“顶呱呱，顶时髦”的意思，它的比较级和最高级是 *badder/baddest*，而非 *worse/worst*。20 世纪 80 年代美国摇滚歌王 Michael Jackson 的一曲“Bad”风靡一时，很多歌碟歌带上都将它误译为“真坏”，正确的译法是“真棒”。

Related Expressions:

1. bad-mouth: 讲人坏话，恶言攻击。2. bad actor: 有害化学物质，有害植物；做坏事的人，不择手段的危险人物。3. bad break: 倒霉，晦气，错误。4. bad breath: 坏气味；口臭。5. bad hair day: 倒霉的日子。6. bad light: 不充足的光线；不适当的见解。7. be in a bad way: 情况不妙；身体不好。8. give sb. a bad cap: 讲人坏话，揭人隐私，诽谤他人。

Practice:

1. He that spares the bad injures the good.
2. That's not half bad.

Bag

What's the most popular and unpopular bag in the world? 答案是: moneybags(钱袋子——有钱人), the bag under the eyes(眼袋)。

Related Expressions:

1. bag job: 破门而入的强盗行为; (政府人员) 侵入住宅非法搜查。2. bear the bag: 掌管钱财。3. give sb. the bag: 解雇某人。4. have/get/tie a bag on: 饮酒作乐。5. hold the bag: 分到最差的东西; 两手空空; 背黑锅。6. leave/give sb. the bag to hold: 让某人背黑锅; 危难中只顾自己溜走。7. put sb. in a bag: 占某人上风; 制服某人。8. set one's bag for: 对……有野心; 设计谋取。9. turn to bag and wallet: 行乞。10. the whole bag of tricks: 各种方法, 种种手段。

Practice:

1. He is a bag of wind.
2. We have had the victory in the bag.
3. Let's bag it! I've had enough!
4. Now let me empty the bag to you.
5. Please put it in the doggy bag.
6. The boy often bags school.
7. That's my bag.

Ball

The ball is at your court/feet.

“球已到你那边了。”你该怎么办? 当然是把球打过去。“The ball is at your court/feet.”

Related Expressions:

1. a ball of fire: 精力充沛的人。2. a ball of wax: 令人感兴趣的人。3. an odd ball: 怪人。4. break one's balls: 拼命干。5. break sb.'s balls: 让某人吃苦头, 遭难。6. carry the ball: 担任重要角色, 负主要责任。7. catch the ball before bound: 先发制人(布什的“先发制人”是 preemption)。8. have a lot on the ball: 能干。9. have nothing on the ball: 毫无本领。10. have sth. on the ball: 颇有本事。11. keep the ball rolling: 继续做某事。12. play balls on sth.: 与某人合作。13. put balls on sth.: 给某事/某物增色, 使……生动出色/有乐趣。14. run with the ball: 赶快执行命令/完成任务。15. strike the ball under the line: 失败。16. take up the ball: 接着做某事。

Practice:

1. Get on the ball! Or you'll make a balls.
2. I'm all balled up by you. Can't you put it clearer to me?
3. We had a ball yesterday.
4. We must keep our eye on the ball.
5. We're behind the eight ball now. We have to set the ball rolling immediately.

Banana

香蕉是一种很受人喜爱的热带水果, 在英语中, 它又有另一含义: 香蕉人, 黄皮白心, 指那些完全美国化了的亚裔。这类人皮肤是黄的, 心里却认同白人的价值观。类似的说法还有 Twinkle, 一种外黄内白的甜点心。对于菲律宾或拉美移民的称呼是 Coconut (椰子), 指这些人皮肤深色, 心却是白的。非裔美国

人则是 Oreos, 夹心饼, 外黑内白。另有一种对喜爱中国/亚洲文化的白人的称呼: 鸡蛋人, 外白内黄。

Related Expressions:

1. a big/top banana: 重要人物, 大人物。2. banana oil: 油腔滑调; 花言巧语, 奉承话。3. banana skin: 香蕉皮; 困难/尴尬局面的原因。4. second banana: 次要人物, 随从, 配角。

Practice:

1. The naughty boy nearly made me go bananas.
2. Don't throw a banana skin under my feet. It's in vain.

Bargain

购物时我们喜欢砍价 (bargain), 商家却喜欢 “No bargain” (一口价, 不还价)。“She is no bargain”却不是不还价的意思, 而是“她可不是省油的灯”。no bargain: 不好对付的人。

Related Expressions:

1. a bargaining counter: 谈判中的有利地位/条件 (亦作 bargaining chip)。2. a bargain sale: 廉价甩卖; 大拍卖。3. drive a hard bargain: 杀价; 迫使对方接受苛刻条件。4. Dutch bargain: 酒席上谈成的生意; 对一方有利的买卖。5. Faustian bargain: 浮士德式的交易, 不平等的契约, 出卖灵魂的交易。6. sell sb. a bargain: 欺骗/愚弄某人。7. Smithfield bargain: 欺诈/使对方上当的交易; 贪图私利的交易, 买卖婚姻。

Practice:

1. A bargain is a bargain. You can't change your mind freely.
2. He bought a coat at a low price, and a pair of good trousers into the bargain. He was very glad because it was much more than he

had bargained for.

3. In order to sign the contract they had to wet a bargain. Bare words. No bargain, you know.

4. That's a bargain.

5. We must make the best of a bad bargain.

Bark

英语的拟声词好像不如汉语的丰富, 而且也不太像。比如 “bark”, 狗吠声。远不如汉语 “汪汪” 那么听起来像狗叫, 还有模拟鸭叫的 “quack” 也不太像, 不知何故。

Related Expressions:

1. bark up the wrong tree: 攻击错了目标; 把精力花在了不该用的地方。2. come/go between the bark and tree: 多管别人夫妻间的闲事。3. keep a dog and bark oneself: 做自己下属的工作。4. take the bark off sth.: 剥去动人的外衣; 降低某物的价值。5. talk the bark off a tree: 唠叨不休。6. teach a dog to bark: 枉费心机做多余的事。

Practice:

1. A barking dog is better than a sleeping lion.
2. Don't bark at the moon. You always have more bark than bite.

Basket

在中国学英语的人中, basket 总是和 ball 连在一起。basketball 的概念深入人心, 而 basket 这个单词的意义和用法几乎给忽略了。看来似乎该给它正一下名, 免得它老是 “名不正言不顺” 的。basket: 篮子。