
Preface to the first edition

The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* is a completely new 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 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 database of the Oxford Reading Programme, a collection of citations 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 benefited from the opportunities provided for communication by the Internet; lively discussions by email across the oceans have formed an everyday part of the dictionary-making process.

Many people have been involved in the preparation of this dictionary, and thanks are due to them all. Those not listed on the separate credits page who deserve special mention include: Valerie Grundy, for her contribution as managing editor during the early stages of the project; Nigel Clifford, for research in special subjects; Fred McDonald, for work on word histories; Sue Atkins, Bob Allen, and Rosamund Moon, for their contributions during the early development of the project; Judith Scott, for assistance with foreign pronunciations; and David Munro, for assistance in updating place-name entries.

Preface to the second edition

The first edition of the groundbreaking *New Oxford Dictionary of English* was published in 1998. For this second edition, now called simply the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, the text has been completely revised, a major part of that revision being the addition of over 3,000 new words, senses, and phrases to ensure that the dictionary continues to be the most accurate and up-to-date description of the language available. The source for this new material has been the Oxford English Corpus, a database which provides an extensive picture of current English as an international language. In compiling this new edition we have been able to draw on a new 100 million word corpus incorporating real English of the 21st century and made up of a balanced selection of texts from all subject fields, and have continued to monitor the language via the database of the Oxford Reading Programme, which now consists of around 77 million words. These databases have provided much of the evidence for around sixty new usage notes, covering

points of grammar, spelling, usage, and pronunciation. We have also undertaken or commissioned work in adding new vocabulary in specialist subject areas such as genetics, health, medicine, and business, and in varieties of English from around the world.

The second edition also includes a new section of appendices providing useful factual information on subjects such as countries of the world and weights and measures, a discussion of English in electronic communication, and a guide to good English.

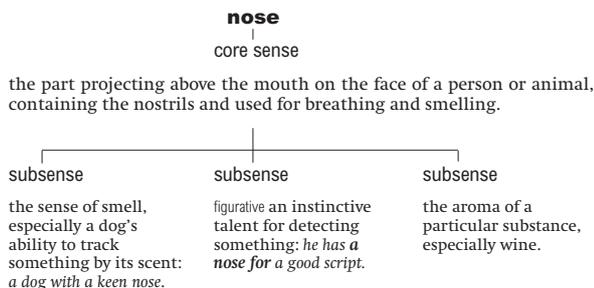
Apart from the contributors listed on the separate credits page, the editors would like to thank Michael Proffitt and his team for help with drafting new words, Glynnis Chantrell and Adam Kilgariff for their work in developing the database, Edmund Weiner, Joanna Tulloch, and Anthony Grant for work on etymologies, and Bill Trumble for advice on scientific entries.

Introduction

The *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.



Within each part of speech the first definition given is the **core sense**. The general principle on which the senses in the *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 Oxford English Corpus and other language databases. The core meaning is the one accepted by native speakers as the most literal and central 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 sometimes the most frequently used modern sense of a word is a figurative one.

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.

nose ► **noun** **1** the part projecting above the mouth on the face of a person or animal, containing the nostrils and used for breathing and smelling.
■ [in sing.] the sense of smell, especially a dog's ability to track something by its scent: a dog with a keen nose.
■ [in sing.] figurative an instinctive talent for detecting something: he has a nose for a good script. ■ the aroma of a particular substance, especially wine.

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.

logjam

core sense a crowded mass of logs blocking a river.
subsense ■ figurative a situation that seems irresolvable: the president can use his power to **break the logjam** over this issue.
subsense ■ figurative a backlog: keeping a diary may ease the logjam of work.

bankrupt

core sense (of a person or organization) declared in law as unable to pay their debts.
subsense ■ figurative completely lacking in a particular good quality: 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.

basement

core sense the floor of a building which is partly or entirely below ground level.
subsense ■ Geology the oldest formation of rocks underlying a particular area.

(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 is grown chiefly in the tropics.
subsense ■ the hollow jointed stem of this plant, used as a cane or to make furniture and implements.

management

- core sense the process of dealing with or controlling things or people.
- subsense ■ [treated as sing. or pl.] the people managing a company or organization, regarded collectively: *management were extremely cooperative.*

ambassador

- core sense an accredited diplomat sent by a state as its permanent representative in a foreign country.
- subsense ■ a representative or promoter of a specified activity: *he is a good ambassador for the industry.*

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, typically round the waist, 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 area that is different in nature or composition from its surroundings: *the asteroid belt | a belt of trees.*
- core sense **4** informal a heavy blow: *she administered 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 *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: C₂₀H₁₂.

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

cuttlebone ► noun

- the flattened oval internal skeleton of the cuttlefish, which is made of white light-weight chalky material. It is used as a dietary supplement for cage birds and for making casts for precious metal items.
- definition
- additional information

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 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 *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 appeared in general dictionaries. The style and presentation of these entries follow the general principles for specialist vocabulary in the *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 pointed 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 ● *Dasyercus 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 ● *Thujaopsis 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 *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 *Oxford Dictionary of English* and the inclusion of additional material in separate blocks reflect this approach.

The *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 *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: <i>they bombed *the city* at dawn.</i>
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: <i>it just became another big-budget film that bombed.</i>
grammar	[no obj.]
core sense	Brit. informal move very quickly: <i>we were bombing *down the motorway* at breakneck speed.</i>
grammar	[no obj., with adverbial of direction]

(asterisks show adverbial in example)

This has particular relevance for a dictionary such as the *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 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:

cushy
 ... (of a job or situation) undemanding, easy, or secure: *the Caribbean posting is not **cushy** number.*

end
 ... (**end up**) eventually come to a specified place or situation: *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

Nouns and senses of nouns are generally categorized in this dictionary as being either [mass noun] or [count noun]. A mass noun is one which is not ordinarily found in the plural and is 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’), while a count noun is one which can be used with the indefinite article ‘a’ and can take a plural (e.g. shirt, shirts).

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 hit back and forth across a net.

banking¹
 [mass noun] the business conducted or services offered by a bank.

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

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

However, there are particular types of mass noun which nevertheless can take a plural form in certain circumstances. For example, the noun ‘cheese’ normally behaves as a mass noun (e.g. *their meals consisted mostly of bread and cheese*) but it can take a plural when referring to different types of cheese (e.g. *the panel tasted a range of cheeses*). For native speakers of English, this use is predictable and well recognized, and the same principle can apply to any food or drink. Not all these predictable uses are recorded for individual entries in the dictionary, for reasons of space and conciseness. Nevertheless, it is useful to record that these groups of nouns can take a plural, particularly for word games. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* is the official dictionary of the television word game *Countdown*, and for this and other word games the main categories of mass noun in which a plural may be used are listed here.

- 1 Types or varieties of:
- food and drink, e.g. yogurt/yogurts, pasta/pastas, rum/ rums.
 - plants: e.g. clover/clovers, barley/barleys.
 - fabric: e.g. gingham/ginghams, silk/silks.
 - certain languages or subjects: e.g. English/Englishes, music/musics.

- metals and alloys: e.g. steel/steels, solder/solders.
- rocks: e.g. granite/granites, lava/lavas, clay/clays.
- chemical compounds: e.g. fluoride/fluorides, hydride/hydrides.
- other substances or materials: e.g. rind/rinds, soil/soils, sealskin/sealskins, sunscreen/suncreams.

2 Portions or units of something, especially food and drink: e.g. lager (glasses/bottles of lager = lagers), paella (portions of paella = paellas).

3 Shades of colours: e.g. pink/pinks, scarlet/scarlets, grey/ greys.

4 An instance of:

- an action or process: e.g. completion (an instance of completing a property sale = completions), genocide (an act of genocide = genocides), lambing (an act of lambing = lambings).
- a surgical operation: e.g. circumcision/circumcisions.
- an emotion, pain, or feeling: e.g. backache/backaches, grief (an instance or cause of grief = griefs).

5 An area of land of a specified type: e.g. bogland/boglands, terrain/terrains.

Other terms relating to nouns:

[**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 being shown in brackets in the definition), e.g.

belabour

[with obj.] argue or discuss (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 means something very different). Note that attributive use is standard for many adjectives, especially those in specialist or technical fields: the [attrib.] label is not used in such cases.

[**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. it 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 emphasize 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, Finance, Chemistry, or Sport, for example).

1. Oxford English Corpus

The *Oxford Dictionary of English* was compiled using the Oxford English Corpus, which is the source both for material added to this second edition and also for updating and revising the text of the first edition. The Oxford English Corpus is the collective name for our holdings of language databases amounting to hundreds of millions of words of written and spoken English in machine-readable form, available for computational analysis. Among these language resources are the British National Corpus (100 million words) and the database of the Oxford Reading Programme (see below). In addition we have compiled a brand-new 100 million word corpus, incorporating real English of the 21st century and made up of a balanced selection of texts from all subject fields, and covering genres as diverse as Internet chat-room 'speech', academic and scholarly journals, fiction, and journalism. By using concordancing techniques, each word can be viewed almost instantaneously in the immediate contexts in which it is used. Whereas compilers of previous dictionaries were able to base their work on only a limited selection of citations, lexicographers on the *Oxford Dictionary of English* analysed hundreds of examples of each word to see how real language behaves today.

food a tions are over , but that does n't mean the fun has to end . Autumn in California , like the rest of the nati
 fictio ur last hours together , wishing the night would never end . But the moon still rose and the crowd did drift
 fictio e . Well , it would be an adventure that would have to end . Gault had already received the communique for th
 busine on record . Ward 's forecasts vehicle inventories will end March 1.8 % below their Feb. 28 level , helping to
 chatro o listen though ... : People were saying the boom would end a : year ago . They were wrong . What was the down
 travel cinating as it often is -- can be very tiring , and to end a journey in a city where shopping , dining , nigh
 genera always made it clear that all paramilitary groups must end all forms of terrorist activity -- that includes c
 fictio was the undisputed master of the school , the jock to end all jocks . Nearly eighteen years old , built like
 genera r , the risk of sustaining a serious injury that could end a sporting career is never far away . Look at the
 genera said it was not clear when the war on terrorism would end but noted it could only end " in victory for Ameri
 busine l Houari Boumedienne overthrows Ben Bella , pledges to end corruption . 1976 - Boumedienne introduces a new c
 genera . The administration has resisted Israeli pressure to end diplomatic contact with Mr Arafat . However , it d
 genera ls Queen Mother 31.07 . 2001 : Storms will sweep in to end heatwave 30.07 . 2001 : Home is where the heat is
 genera Banzer 's current five-year presidential term , due to end in August 2002 . In his inauguration speech last s
 chatro yourself in front of a train is almost always going to end in a quick and painless death . Not only does the
 genera vicious circle with no beginning and no end in sight . Ultimately , unless we so decide it ca
 gener .Will Mr Putin 's strategy also end in tears ? Will he be floored by a b
 genera time instead of the normal four , and beer sales will end in the sixth inning instead of the seventh . City
 food_a's contract , according to the statement , was set to end officially on Sept. 15,200 2 . Canelle , however ,
 genera ate to secure a right-wing majority in parliament , to end the " cohabitation " between left and right which
 milita to June , 1862 Major General McClellan 's strategy to end the Confederate rebellion did not go as planned an
 chatro en panicked and begin cancelling bids , in a frenzy to end the auction , I think AS must have been one of the
 genera 00 high school seniors from three different schools to end their school year with the country music star . St
 comput ven remotely forthcoming . The WOA announcement should end the long-running speculation on what chip Amiga ha
 genera ree-thinking Labour MP , Graham Allen . He suggests we end the pretence and admit we have a UK presidency . T
 food_a ity and safety , " she said . Still , the job does n't end there . Consumers need a hand in handling seafood
 genera ceasefire was declared on Sunday as part of a plan to end the six-month rebellion . Rebels told Reuters that
 general Democrats toy with legalisation . And they will end the tough mandatory sentences for drug dealers . I
 genera . <p> ID:034405 To the relief of many , the Nikkei did end the year above the 11,000 mark Japan kicked off it
 gay_an ife living it for others . I do n't really know how to end this ... this was more of a rant than an article .
 genera y good NATO is coming into the country because it will end this six-month crisis . " <p> ID:056237 WASHINGTON
 chatro compensate people for hurting their feelings you would end up a pauper .)) Personally I think they will los
 busine nations currently estimated at \$ 3.4 bn a year , could end up as Thailand 's first bilateral trade deal . Aus
 genera he World Cup but afterwards the fear is that they will end up as expensive white elephants because attendance
 chatro a real central government the states would eventually end up at war with each other . The democrats and repu
 comput , the technology , as well as secure messages , could end up coming out scrambled . ? Related Link AuthXML h
 garden awn has a very bumpy surface , dropping the blades may end up creating " bald " patches . So in setting blade
 busine violation of its loan covenants . Basically , it could end up defaulting . Byron points to the December 22 re
 busine t our goal . " If he plays his cards right , Feng will end up doing both . Write to Asiaweek at mail@web.asia
 genera ure she enjoyed her free time . That way she would n't end up feeling like a love slave who 'd sell her story
 genera r and make their way to the training camps . Most will end up fighting for the Taliban or in the vicious conf
 fictio of the rules , I 'd have to stay where I was , or I 'd end up going to Whitburn . So we worked out this arran
 unknow my fin-covered feet . It 's a bit ironic that I should end up here , halfway around the world with a scuba ta
 pets__ r have to worry that his or her pet , if stolen , will end up in a research laboratory . Any dealer who knowi
 unknow een for the door-to-door job . Ultimately , they might end up in charge of hundreds of people . So it was a s
 chatro een the remains of a few accidents and I never want to end up in one . The closest I have come was a few year
 chatro concept . If you go in a boat the intention is not to end up in the water . The buoyancy aid is insurance in
 health ight loss goal . What 's worse , chronic dieters often end up in worse shape than when they started . At
 busine rs and the companies . We believe that e-commerce will end up lowering prices and improving efficiency and re
 busine e top 3 per cent who provide half the comments - could end up paying \$ 5 a month , if they accept ads on the
 geneti Major broadcasters are now so powerful that they could end up posing a threat to existing national leagues an
 interi the borders . Be sure they are snug so that they will end up properly at the wall and leave a good finished
 fictio be the greatest mistake he would ever make . He would end up putting a pyromaniac in jail for 5 years and go
 food_a sour cream and taco chips , for example) , you could end up with a decent , interesting salad . <p> ID:0399
 interi your wine age prematurely and taste bad , or you could end up with excessive mold that will make the labels u
 busine m abroad , and to find innovations they can pass on to end users . Last year 's show drew more than 23,000 pe
 busine mpany recognizes revenue from product sold directly to end users at the time of shipment . " Dictaphone says
 genera lestinian leadership must make a 100 percent effort to end violence and to end terror . There must be real re
 genera to leave on Tuesday . Giuliani 's eight-year term will end when he swears in fellow Republican Michael Bloomb
 food_a k " weight-loss fast . In fact , those effects needn't end when your cleanse does . Think of it as a sneak pr

Figure 1: Extract from a concordance from the Oxford English Corpus, showing the word 'end'.

Concordances show at a glance that some combinations of words (called 'collocations') occur together much more often than others. For example, in Figure 1 above, '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 Oxford English Corpus, the two words 'end the' occur very 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 *Oxford Dictionary of English* particularly significant or important patterns are highlighted, in bold or in bold italics, e.g.

end

[no obj.] (**end in**) as its final part or result: *the match ended in a draw.*

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

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

2. Oxford Reading Programme

The citation database created by the Oxford Reading Programme is an ongoing research project in which readers around the world select citations from a huge variety of specialist and non-specialist sources in all varieties of English. This database currently stands at around 77 million words and is growing at a rate of 6 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 *Oxford Dictionary of English*, enabling additional research and collection of citations in a number of important fields, for example food and cooking, health and fitness, boats and sailing, photography, genetics, martial arts, and complementary medicine.

4. Examples

The *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 invented 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 providing 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 *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, boorish, 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 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 *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 a clue or piece of information which is or is intended to be misleading or distracting: *the argument about women’s choices is largely a red herring*.

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 *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 *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 more comfortable accommodation, out of the heat of the sun, on ships between England and India).

snob

origin – ORIGIN late 18th cent. (originally dialect in the sense ‘cobbler’): of unknown origin; early senses conveyed a notion of ‘lower status or rank’, later denoting a person seeking to imitate those of superior social standing or wealth. Folk etymology connects the word with Latin *sine nobilitate* ‘without nobility’ but the first recorded sense has no connection with this.

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 *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 *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 Oxford English 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.

preposition

usage note **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.

due

usage note

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; **owing to** is often recommended as a better alternative. 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.

aggravate

usage note

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 *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 *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, and the ways that disability is referred to have come under close examination. The usage notes in the *Oxford Dictionary of English* offer information and practical advice on such issues.

man

usage note

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.

native

usage note

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.

disabled

usage note

USAGE The word **disabled** came to be used as the standard term in referring to people with physical or mental disabilities in the second half of the 20th century, and it remains the most generally accepted term in both British and US English today. It superseded outmoded, now often offensive, terms such as **crippled**, **defective**, and **handicapped** and has not been overtaken itself by newer coinages such as **differently abled** or **physically challenged**. Although the usage is very widespread, some people regard the use of the adjective as a plural noun (as in *the needs of the disabled*) as dehumanizing because it tends to treat people with disabilities as an undifferentiated group, defined merely by their capabilities. To avoid offence, a more acceptable term would be **people with disabilities**.

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 *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 among 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.

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 *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.

euphemistic: mild or indirect language used to avoid making direct reference to something unpleasant or taboo.

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, West Indian, and SE Asian. 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 *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 *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 **1** a light truck or pickup truck.

larrikin

Austral./NZ 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.

history-sheeter

► noun Indian a person with a criminal record.

sufferation

► noun [mass noun] W. Indian unpleasant experiences; suffering: *our sufferation shall be no more*.

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 email, 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 *Oxford Dictionary of English* are common to all the major regional standard varieties of English, but where important local differences exist, the *Oxford Dictionary of English* records them. There are more than 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 *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 *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. The entries below show that **filo** is the form most commonly used, but **phyllo** is equally correct and acceptable, although found less frequently.

filo /'fi:ləʊ/ (also **phyllo**)

phyllo variant spelling of **FILo**.

aluminium (US **aluminum**)

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**.

-ise or ize?

Many verbs end with the suffix **-ize** or **ise**. The form **-ize** has been in use in English since the 16th century, and, despite what some people think, is not an Americanism. The alternative form **-ise** is found more commonly in British than in American English. For most verbs of this class either **-ize** or **-ise** is acceptable; this dictionary has used **-ize** spellings, with **-ise** given as an equally correct, alternative spelling. For some words, however, **-ise** is obligatory: first, where it forms part of a larger word element, such as **-mise** (= sending) in **compromise**, and **-prise** (= taking) in **surprise**; and second, in verbs corresponding to nouns with **-s** in the stem, such as **advertise** and **televise**.

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 saying whether, for example, **airstream**, **air stream**, or **air-stream** is correct. All forms are found in use: all are recorded in the Oxford English 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 form to be two words, e.g. **buck tooth** tends to be the commonest form in British English, while **bucktooth** tends to be the commonest form in US English. To save space and avoid confusion, only one of the three potential forms of each noun compound (the standard British one) is used as the headword form in the *Oxford Dictionary of English*. This does not, however, imply that other forms are incorrect or not used.

Grammatical function: Hyphens are also used to perform certain grammatical functions. When a noun compound made up of two separate words (e.g. **credit card**) is placed before another noun and used to modify it, the general rule is that the noun compound becomes hyphenated, e.g. *I used my credit card* but *credit-card debt*. This sort of regular alternation is seen in example sentences in the *Oxford Dictionary of English* but is not otherwise explicitly mentioned in the dictionary entries.

A similar alternation is found in compound adjectives such as **well intentioned**. When used predicatively (i.e. after the verb), such adjectives are unhyphenated, but when used attributively (i.e. before the noun), they are hyphenated: *his remarks were well intentioned* but *a well-intentioned remark*.

A general rule governing verb compounds means that, where a noun compound is two words (e.g. **beta test**), any verb derived from it is normally hyphenated (to **beta-test**: *the system was beta-tested*). Similarly, verbal nouns and adjectives are more often hyphenated than ordinary noun or adjective compounds (e.g. **glass-making**, **nation-building**).

Phrasal verbs such as ‘take off’, ‘take over’, and ‘set up’ are not hyphenated, but nouns formed from phrasal verbs are hyphenated, or, increasingly, written as one word: *the plane accelerated for take-off*; *a hostile takeover*; *he didn’t die, it was a set-up*. There is an increasing tendency to hyphenate the verb form as well (*food available to take-away*) but this is not good writing style and should be avoided.

Inflection

Compared with other European languages, English has comparatively few inflections, and those that exist are remarkably regular. We add an *-s* to most nouns to make a plural; we add *-ed* to most verbs to make a past tense or a past participle, and *-ing* to make a present participle.

Occasionally, a difficulty arises: for example, a single consonant after a short stressed vowel is doubled before adding *-ed* or *-ing* (**hum**, **hums**, **humming**, **hummed**). In addition, words borrowed from other languages generally bring their foreign inflections with them, causing problems for English speakers who are not proficient in those languages.

In all such cases, guidance is given in the *Oxford Dictionary of English*. The main areas covered are outlined below.

Verbs

The following forms are regarded as regular and are therefore not shown in the dictionary:

- third person singular present forms adding *-s* to the stem (or *-es* to stems ending in *-s*, *-x*, *-z*, *-sh*, or soft *-ch*), e.g. **find** → **finds** or **possess** → **possesses**
- past tenses and past participles dropping a final silent *e* and adding *-ed* to the stem, e.g. **change** → **changed** or **dance** → **danced**

- present participles dropping a final silent *e* and adding *-ing* to the stem, e.g. **change** → **changing** or **dance** → **dancing**

Other forms are given in the dictionary, notably for:

- verbs which inflect by doubling a consonant, e.g. **bat** → **batting**, **batted**
- verbs ending in *-y* which inflect by changing *-y* to *-i*, e.g. **try** → **tries**, **tried**
- verbs in which past tense and past participle do not follow the regular *-ed* pattern, e.g. **feel** → PAST and PAST PARTICIPLE **felt**; **awake** → PAST **awoke**; PAST PARTICIPLE **awoken**
- present participles which add *-ing* but retain a final *e* (in order to make clear that the pronunciation of *g* remains soft), e.g. **singe** → **singeing**

Nouns

Plurals formed by adding *-s* (or *-es* when they end in *-s*, *-x*, *-z*, *-sh*, or soft *-ch*) are regarded as regular and are not shown.

Other plural forms are given in the dictionary, notably for:

- nouns ending in *-i* or *-o*, e.g. **agouti** → **agoutis**; **albino** → **albinos**
- nouns ending in *-a*, *-um*, or *-us* which are or appear to be Latinate forms, e.g. **alumna** → **alumnae**; **spectrum** → **spectra**; **alveolus** → **alveoli**
- nouns ending in *-y*, e.g. **fly** → **flies**
- nouns with more than one plural form, e.g. **storey** → **storeys** or **stories**
- nouns with plurals showing a change in the stem, e.g. **foot** → **feet**
- nouns with plurals unchanged from the singular form, e.g. **sheep** → **sheep**

Adjectives

The following forms for comparative and superlative are regarded as regular and are not shown in the dictionary:

- words of one syllable adding *-er* and *-est*, e.g. **great** → **greater**, **greatest**
- words of one syllable ending in silent *e*, which drop the *-e* and add *-er* and *-est*, e.g. **brave** → **braver**, **bravest**
- words which form the comparative and superlative by adding ‘more’ and ‘most’

Other forms are given in the dictionary, notably for:

- adjectives which form the comparative and superlative by doubling a final consonant, e.g. **hot** → **hotter**, **hottest**
- two-syllable adjectives which form the comparative and superlative with *-er* and *-est* (typically adjectives ending in *-y* and their negative forms), e.g. **happy** → **happier**, **happiest**; **unhappy** → **unhappier**, **unhappiest**

Pronunciations

Generally speaking, native speakers of English do not need information about the pronunciation for ordinary, everyday words such as **bake**, **baby**, **beach**, **bewilder**, **boastful**, or **budget**. For this reason, no pronunciations are given for such words (or their compounds and derivatives) in the *Oxford Dictionary of English*. Words such as **baba ganoush**, **baccalaureate**, **beatific**, **bijouterie**, **bucolic**, and **buddleia**, on the other hand, are less familiar and may give problems. Similarly, difficulties are often encountered in pronouncing names of people and places, especially foreign ones, such as **Dehra**, **Dun**, **Kieslowski**, and **Althusser**.

In the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, the principle followed is that pronunciations are given where they are likely to cause problems for the native speaker of English, in particular for foreign words, foreign names, scientific and other specialist terms, rare words, words with unusual stress patterns, and words where there are alternative pronunciations or where there is a dispute about the standard pronunciation.

The *Oxford Dictionary of English* uses the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to represent the standard accent of English as spoken in the south of England (sometimes called Received Pronunciation or RP). The transcriptions reflect pronunciation as it actually is in modern English, unlike some longer-established systems, which reflect the standard pronunciation of broadcasters and public schools in the 1930s. It is recognized that, although the English of southern England is the pronunciation given, many variations are heard in standard speech in other parts of the English-speaking world.

The symbols used for English words, with their values, are given below. In multi-syllable words the symbol ' is used to show that the following syllable is stressed (as in kə'tʃəl); ˌ indicates a secondary stress (as in ˌkælə'brɪz).

Consonants: *b, d, f, h, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, v, w,* and *z* have their usual English values. Other symbols are used as follows:

g	get	x	loch	ð	this	j	yes
tʃ	chip	ŋ	ring	ʃ	she		
dʒ	jar	θ	thin	ʒ	decision		

Vowels

SHORT VOWELS	LONG VOWELS (ː indicates length)	DIPHTHONGS	TRIPHTHONGS				
a	cat	ɑː	arm	ʌɪ	my	ʌɪə	fire
ɛ	bed	ɛː	hair	aʊ	how	aʊə	sour
ə	ago	ɔː	her	eɪ	day		
ɪ	sit	iː	see	əʊ	no		
i	cosy	ɔː	saw	ɪə	near		
ɒ	hot	uː	too	ɔɪ	boy		
ʌ	run			ʊə	poor		
ʊ	put						

(ə) before /l/, /m/, or /n/ indicates that the syllable may be realized with a syllabic **l**, **m**, or **n**, rather than with a vowel and a consonant, e.g. /'bʌt(ə)n/ rather than /'bʌtən/.

(r) indicates an **r** that is sometimes sounded when a vowel follows, as in *drawer*, *cha-chair*.

Foreign pronunciations

Foreign words and phrases, whether naturalized or not, are always given an anglicized pronunciation. The anglicized pronunciation represents the normal pronunciation used by native speakers of standard English (who may not be speakers of other languages) when using the word in an English context. A foreign pronunciation is also given for words taken from other languages (principally French, Dutch, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish) where this is appreciably different from the anglicized form and where the other language is familiar to a reasonable number of English speakers.

Where the native form of a foreign place name is given in addition to the anglicized form, only the foreign pronunciation of this form is given, e.g.

Wisła /'viswə/
Polish name for **VISTULA**.

Foreign-language transcriptions are based on current national standards. Regional variations have not been given, except in the case of Spanish transcriptions, where both Castilian and American Spanish variants are given (if distinct). Transcriptions are broad, and many

symbols, identical to those used for transcribing English, have similar values to those of RP. In a few cases, where there is no English equivalent to a foreign sound, a symbol has been added to the inventory. The additional symbols used to represent foreign pronunciations are given below.

Consonants

ç	(German)	Ehr lich , gemüt lich
ɲ	(French)	Monse igneur , Auver gne , Daub igny
	(Italian)	Emilia-Rom agna
	(Portuguese)	Minho
	(Spanish)	Españ a , Buñ uel
β	(Spanish)	Bil bao
γ	(Spanish)	Burg os
ʎ	(Italian)	Cagli ari
z	(Hungarian)	Magy ar ország
ʀ	French 'r'	Anvers, Ar les
r	all other values of 'r' in other featured languages	(German) Braunschweig (Italian) Alberti (Russian) Grodno (Spanish) Algeciras, zarzuela

Vowels

SHORT VOWELS	LONG VOWELS (ː indicates length)		
ɐ	(German) Abitur	aː	(Dutch) Den Haag
ɑ	(Dutch) Nederland		(German) Aachen
e	(French) abbé	eː	(German) Wehrmacht
	(Italian) Croce		(Dutch) Nederland
	(Spanish) Albacete		(Irish) Gaeltacht
o	(French) auberge	oː	(German) verboten
	(Italian) Palio		(Hungarian) Brassó
	(Spanish) Cortes		
ɔ	(French) Bonnard		
	(German) durchkomponiert		
	(Greek) Dílos		
	(Hungarian) Brassó		
	(Italian) Borgia		
œ	(French) Pasteur		
ø	(French) Jussieu	øː	(German) Gasthöfe
u	(French) Anjou		
	(Italian) Duccio		
	(Spanish) Asunción		
y	(French) cru	yː	(German) gemütlich
ʏ	(German) München		
j	(Irish) Dáil		
	(Russian) Arkhangelsk		
ɔ̃	(French) Horta		

NASALIZED VOWELS
(˜ indicates nasality)

DIPHTHONGS

ã	pincette	} used for anglicized French pronunciations	aɪ	(German) Gleichschaltung
õ	cordón bleu			
ã	(French) Danton, Lac Lemans			
ɛ̃	(French) Amiens, Rodin			
œ̃	(French) Verdun			
ɔ̃	(French) arrondissement			

How to use this dictionary

New part of speech (introduced by ▶) Part of speech

ear ▶ **noun** the organ of hearing and balance in humans and other vertebrates, especially the external part of this. Core sense

Subsenses (introduced by ■) ■ an organ sensitive to sound in other animals. ■ [in sing.] an ability to recognize, appreciate, and reproduce sounds, especially music or language: **an ear for rhythm and melody**. ■ used to refer to a person's willingness to listen to others: *she offers a sympathetic ear to worried pet owners*.

Encyclopedic information (in separate block) The ear of a mammal 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 (where vibrations are converted to nerve impulses) and the three semicircular canals (forming the organ of balance).

Phrase Example (showing typical use) **be all ears** informal be listening eagerly. **bring something (down) about one's ears** bring misfortune on oneself: *she brought her world crashing about her ears*. **one's ears are burning** one is subconsciously aware of being talked about or criticized. **have something coming out of one's ears** informal: *that man's got money coming out of his ears*. **have someone's ear** have access to and influence with someone: *he claimed to have the prime minister's ear*. **have (or keep) an ear to the ground** be well informed about events and trends. **in one ear and out the other** heard but quickly forgotten: *whatever he tells me seems to go in one ear and out the other*. **listen with half an ear** not give one's full attention. **be out on one's ear** informal be dismissed ignominiously. **up to one's ears in** informal very busy with: *I'm up to my ears in work here*. Label (showing level of formality)

Homonym number (indicates different word with the same spelling)

ear ▶ **noun** the seed-bearing head or spike of a cereal plant. ■ N. Amer. a head of maize. - ORIGIN Old English *ĕar*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *aar* and German *Ähre*.

Pronunciation (for selected words)

Earhart /'ɛ:hɑ:t/, Amelia (1898–1937), American aviator. In 1932 she became the first woman to fly across the Atlantic solo. Her aircraft disappeared over the Pacific Ocean during a subsequent round-the-world flight with the loss of Earhart and her navigator. Encyclopedic entry (biography)

Common collocation
(highlighted within the example)

earn ▶ **verb** [with obj.] **1** obtain (money) in return for labour or services: *he **earns his living** as a lorry driver* | [with two objs] *earn yourself a few pounds.*
 ■ [with two objs] (of an activity) cause (someone) to obtain (money): *this latest win earned them \$50,000 in prize money.* ■ (of capital invested) gain (money) as interest or profit.
2 gain deservedly in return for one's behaviour or achievements: *through the years she has earned affection and esteem.*
 - PHRASES **earn one's corn** Brit; informal put in a lot of effort to show that one deserves one's wages. **earn one's keep** work in return for food and accommodation. ■ be worth the time or money spent on one.
 - ORIGIN Old English *earnian*, of West Germanic origin, from a base shared by Old English *esne* 'labourer'.

Label (showing regional distribution)

earwig ▶ **noun** a small elongated insect with a pair of terminal appendages that resemble pincers.
 ● Order Dermaptera: several families.
 ▶ **verb** (earwigs, earwiggling, earwigged) [no obj.] Brit; informal; eavesdrop on a conversation: *he looked behind him to see if anyone was earwiggling.*
 ■ [with obj] archaic influence (someone) by secret means.
 - ORIGIN Old English *earwicga*, from *ear* 'ear' + *wicga* 'earwig' (probably related to *wiggle*); the insect was once thought to crawl into the human ear.

Label (showing level of formality)

Label (showing currency)

ebullient /ɪ'buljənt, -'bɒl-/ ▶ **adjective** **1** cheerful and full of energy: *she sounded ebullient and happy.*
2 archaic (of liquid or matter) boiling or agitated as if boiling: *misted and ebullient seas.*
 - DERIVATIVES **ebullience** noun, **ebulliently** adverb, **ebulliency** noun.
 - ORIGIN late 16th cent. (in the sense 'boiling'): from Latin *ebullient-* 'boiling up', from the verb *ebullire*, from *e-* (variant of *ex-* 'out' + *bullire* 'to boil'.

Word origin (showing morphological and sense development):

ecdysis /'ekdɪsɪs, ek'daɪsɪs/ ▶ **noun** [mass noun] Zoology the process of shedding the old skin (in reptiles) or casting off the outer cuticle (in insects and other arthropods).
 - DERIVATIVES **ecdysial** /ek'dɪzɪəl/ adjective.
 - ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from Greek *ekdusis*, from *ekduein* 'put off', from *ek-* 'out, off' + *duein* 'put'.

Subject label

echidna /ɪ'kɪdnə/ ▶ **noun** a spiny insectivorous egg-laying mammal with a long snout and claws, native to Australia and New Guinea. Also called **SPINY ANTEATER**.
 ● Family Tachyglossidae, order Monotremata: two genera and species.
 - ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: modern Latin, from Greek *ekhidna* 'viper', also the name of a mythical creature which gave birth to the Hydra; compare with *ekhinus* 'sea urchin, hedgehog'.

Alternative name

Technical information (chiefly for animals and plants):

Ecuador /'ekwədɔː, Spanish ekwa'dor/ an equatorial republic in South America, on the Pacific coast; pop. 13,447,494 (est. 2002); languages, Spanish (official), Quechua; capital, Quito.

Encyclopedic entry (place name)

Ranges and plateaux of the Andes separate the coastal plain from the tropical forests of the Amazon basin. Formerly part of the Inca empire, Ecuador was conquered by the Spanish in 1534 and remained part of Spain's American empire until, after the first uprising against Spanish rule in 1809, independence was gained in 1822.

Additional information (in separate block):

- DERIVATIVES **Ecuadorean** adjective & noun.

Verb inflections

edit ▶ **verb** (edits, editing, edited) [with obj.] **1** prepare (written material) for publication by correcting, condensing, or otherwise modifying it: *Volume I was edited by J. Johnson.*
 ■ choose material for (a film or radio or television programme) and arrange it to form a coherent whole: [as adj] *edited highlights of the match.* ■ change (online text) on a word processor or computer. ■ **(edit something out)** remove unnecessary or inappropriate material from a text, film, or radio or television programme.
2 be editor of (a newspaper or magazine).
 ▶ **noun** a change or correction made as a result of editing.
 - ORIGIN late 18th cent. (as a verb): partly a back-formation from **EDITOR**, reinforced by French *éditer* 'to edit' (from *édition* 'edition').

Typical form (in bold)

Typical pattern (in bold)

Plural form

elf ► **noun** (pl. **elves**) a supernatural creature of folk tales, typically represented as a small, delicate, elusive figure in human form with pointed ears, magical powers, and a capricious nature.

Derivatives (in alphabetical order):

- DERIVATIVES **elfish** adjective, **elven** adjective (literary), **elvish** adjective.
- ORIGIN Old English, of Germanic origin; related to German Alp 'nightmare'.

Grammatical information (in square brackets)

enter ► **verb 1** come or go into (a place): [with obj.] *she entered the kitchen* | [no obj.] *the door opened and Karl entered*.

■ [no obj.] used as a stage direction to indicate when a character comes on stage: *enter Hamlet*. ■ [with obj.]

come or be introduced into: *the thought never entered my head*. ■ [with obj.] penetrate (something): *the bullet entered his stomach*. ■ [with obj.] (of a man) insert the penis into the vagina of (a woman).

2 [with obj.] begin to be involved in: *in 1941 America entered the war*.

■ become a member of or start working in (an institution or profession): *he entered the army as a cadet*. ■ register as a competitor or participant in a tournament, race, or examination: *they won every race they entered* | *the horse was entered in the Martell Cup at Aintree*.

■ start or reach (a stage or period of time) in an activity or situation: *the election campaign entered its final phase*. ■ [no obj.] (of a particular performer in an ensemble) start or resume playing or singing.

3 write or key (information) in a book, computer, etc.: *children can enter the data into the computer*.

4 Law submit (a statement) in an official capacity: *a solicitor entered a plea of guilty on her behalf*.

► **noun** (also **enter key**) a key on a computer keyboard which is used to perform various functions, such as executing a command or selecting options on a menu.

- ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French *entrer*, from Latin *intrare*, from *intra* 'within'.

Phrasal verbs (introduced by ►)

► **enter into** become involved in (an activity or situation): *they have entered into a relationship*. ■ undertake to bind oneself by (an agreement or other commitment): *the council entered into an agreement with a private firm*. ■ form part of or be a factor in: *medical ethics also enter into the question*.

enter on/upon 1 formal begin (an activity or job); start to pursue (a particular course in life): *he entered upon a turbulent political career*. **2** Law (as a legal entitlement) go freely into (property) as or as if the owner.

Cross reference entry

eon ► **noun** US spelling of **ÆON**.

Variant spelling

epicentre (US **epicenter**) ► **noun** the point on the earth's surface vertically above the focus of an earthquake.

■ the central point of something, typically a difficult or unpleasant situation: *the epicentre of labour militancy was the capital itself*.

- DERIVATIVES **epicentral** adjective.

- ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from Greek *epikentros* 'situated on a centre', from *epi* 'upon' + *kentron* 'centre'.

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