

Explanatory Notes

How to Use Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus

Every thesaurus user should read these Explanatory Notes because a thorough understanding of the scope, content, and structure of the book is essential to its effective employment.

Since the English lexicon contains an incalculable number of fixed combinations, senses, subsenses, and nuances of meaning (for example, Webster's Third New International Dictionary records some 251 distinguishable meanings for the verb *set* and its fixed combinations), *it is essential that the thesaurus be used in conjunction with an adequate dictionary.*

Scope of Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus

This book is concerned with the general vocabulary of the English language. Since the user may actually be hindered rather than helped by a vocabulary diluted with obsolete, archaic, or extremely rare terms or with specialized or technical jargon, such words have been omitted.

Structure and Content

Entry Order The body of the book consists of main and secondary entries introduced by alphabetically ordered boldface headwords, as

raid *vb* **1**to make a raid on < Indians *raided* the settlers frequently >
syn foray, harass, harry, maraud
rel despoil, devastate, ravage, sack, spoliage, waste; loot, plunder, rifle, rob
2 syn INVADE 1, foray, inroad, overrun, overswarm

raider *n* **syn** MARAUDER, forager, freebooter, looter, pillager, plunderer, ravager, ravisher, sacker, spoiler

rail *n* **syn** RAILING, balustrade, banister

where *raid*, *raider*, and *rail* are the headwords introducing either a main

entry (as **raid** *vb* 1), or a secondary entry (as **raid** *vb* 2, **raider** *n*, or **rail** *n*).

Homograph headwords are entered in historical order: the one first used in English is entered first, as

till *prep*
till *conj*
till *vb*

Verbs used predominantly with one or two prepositions or adverbs may be headwords introducing main or secondary entries; in this case, they are entered with the verb segment in boldface type followed by the parenthetical element or elements in lightface type. Such verb + particle combinations immediately follow their base verb in alphabetical order:

put <i>vb</i>	base-verb homograph
put (back) <i>vb</i>	verb+particle combinations
put (on) <i>vb</i>	"
put (on or upon) <i>vb</i>	"
put <i>n</i>	noun homograph

Fixed verb + adverb collocations commonly entered in dictionaries as two-word verbs have boldface entry at their appropriate alphabetical positions in this book. However, they follow any verb + particle combinations occurring in the same alphabetical sequence:

take <i>vb</i>	<i>base verb</i>
take (from) <i>vb</i>	verb+particle combinations
take (to) <i>vb</i>	"
take away <i>vb</i>	<i>two-word verb collocations</i>
take back <i>vb</i>	"
take down <i>vb</i>	"
take in <i>vb</i>	"
take off <i>vb</i>	"

Headwords ordinarily conform to normal dictionary practices: for instance, they are styled as singular nouns or infinitive verbs. Special situations (as plural usage or variant spellings) are signaled by the use of boldface subheads, as

crossroad *n, usu* **crossroads** *pl but sing or pl in constr* **syn** JUNCTURE 2, ...

woe *n...* **3** *usu* **woes** *pl* **syn** DISASTER, ...

catercorner (*or* **catty-corner** *or* **kitty-corner**) *adv* **syn** DIAGONALLY, ...

where **crossroads** and **woes** are subheads indicating plural usage, and **catty-corner** and **kitty-corner** are subheads showing variant spellings of the headwords.

The Main Entry and Its Basic Elements Each main entry consists of a headword followed by a part-of-speech label, a sense number when needed, a meaning core with a brief verbal illustration, and a list of synonyms. Lists of related words, idiomatic equivalents, contrasted words, and antonyms follow the synonym list if they are called for. A typical main entry is

calm *adj* **1** free from storm or rough activity < the wind died and the sea became *calm* >

syn halcyon, hushed, placid, quiet, still, stilly, untroubled

rel inactive, quiescent, reposing, resting; pacific, smooth, tranquil, unruffled

idiom calm as a millpond, still as death

con agitated, disturbed, perturbed, restless, turbulent, uneasy

ant stormy

where the italic part-of-speech label *adj* indicates that the headword is an adjective. Other such labels used in the book are: *adv* (adverb), *conj* (conjunction), *interj* (interjection), *n* (noun), *prep* (preposition), *pron* (pronoun), and *vb* (verb).

Individual senses of multisense entries (as **calm** *adj*) are introduced by a boldface sense number (as **1**).

The meaning core, as at **calm 1**

free from storm or rough activity

indicates the area of meaning in which a group of words (in this case *calm*, *halcyon*, *hushed*, *placid*, *quiet*, *still*, *stilly*, and *untroubled*) are considered to be synonymous.

In other words, the meaning core pinpoints the exact relationship between the main-entry headword and its synonyms.

A meaning core may be supplemented by a usage note introduced by a lightface dash when additional information or comments on syntax or usage are required:

yet *adv* **1** beyond this – used as an intensive to stress the comparative degree

Some interjections express feelings but otherwise are untranslatable into substitutable meaning; in such cases, the meaning core itself may be replaced by a usage note:

good-bye *interj* – used as a conventional expression of good wishes at parting

Each meaning core is followed by a verbal illustration enclosed by angle brackets, as

< the wind died and the sea became *calm* >

that exemplifies a typical use of the headword (here, **calm**) in its pertinent sense (**1**). The verbal illustration also offers the thesaurus user a frame for testing the suitability of the synonyms and/or related words with regard to his particular needs. Two verbal illustrations may appear after a meaning core that is broad enough to subsume alternatives (as both a literal and an extended use):

see *vb* **1** to take cognizance of by physical or mental vision < saw that the boat was being driven ashore > < the only one who saw the truth >

Such double illustrations have been chosen with discretion and are used sparingly in this book.

The boldface italic abbreviation ***syn*** introduces a synonym list that appears at each main entry on a line below the meaning core and the verbal illustration. This list may consist of only one synonym (as *here* at **hitherto** *adv* **2**) or of many (as *halcyon, hushed, placid, quiet, still, stilly, and untroubled* at **calm** *adj* **1**). Each synonym in a main-entry list has a boldface entry at its own alphabetical place.

A compare cross-reference may appear at the end of a main-entry ***syn*** list. This cross-reference introduced by the italic word *compare* is used (1) when two or more groups of synonyms are very closely related and it is felt that the user examining one list should be aware of the existence of the other list or lists:

assassin *n* a person hired or hireable to commit murder < found out who paid the assassin >

syn bravo, cutthroat, gun, gunman, || gungel, gunslinger, hatchet man, hit man, torpedo, triggerman; **compare** MURDERER

murderer *n* one who kills a human being < a murderer who wouldn't hesitate to kill in cold blood >

syn homicide, killer, manslayer, slayer; **compare** ASSASSIN

and (2) when the user should be warned that certain words have evolved derivative senses that tend to blur precise sense boundaries and consequently cause an overlapping of senses or of meaning, thus making those words somewhat less desirable choices for the user in terms of preciseness than other words in the lists. A comparison of the main entries

ration *n* an amount allotted or made available especially from a limited supply < saved up their gasoline ration for a vacation trip >

syn allotment, allowance, apportionment, measure, meed, part, portion, quantum, quota, share; **compare** SHARE 1

share *n* 1 something belonging to, assumed by, or falling to one (as in division or apportionment) < wanted his share of the prize money >

syn allotment, allowance, bite, cut, lot, part, partage, portion, quota, slice; **compare** RATION

reveals the usage overlap of the synonyms *allotment, allowance, part, portion, quota,* and *share*, which are indeed valid synonyms at both entries.

The Secondary Entry and Its Basic Elements

A secondary entry consists of a boldface headword followed by a part-of-speech label, a boldface sense number when needed, a **syn** cross-reference in small capitals directing the user to the appropriate main entry in whose **syn** list the secondary entry appears (followed when needed by a lightface sense number of the main entry), and a list of the other synonyms appearing at the main entry. Lists of related words, idiomatic equivalents, contrasted words, or antonyms that are specifically applicable to the secondary-entry headword in the relationship indicated by the **syn** cross-reference may be included as well. A typical secondary entry is

placid *adj* 1 **syn** CALM 1, halcyon, hushed, quiet, still, stilly, untroubled

rel irenic, peaceful, serene, unagitated, unstimulating

ant roiled

where **placid** is the headword, *adj* is the part-of-speech label, **1** is the sense number of the secondary entry, and **syn** CALM 1 is the **syn** cross-reference directing the user to the main entry **calm 1** where *placid* is a synonym. The terms *halcyon*, *hushed*, *quiet*, *still*, *stilly*, and *untroubled* comprising the secondary-entry **syn** cross-reference list are the synonyms at **calm 1**. As such, each of these terms is entered at its own alphabetical position with at least one sense that is cross-referred to **calm 1**, as

still *adj* **1 syn** MOTIONLESS, ...
2 syn CALM 1, halcyon, hushed, placid, quiet, stilly, untroubled
rel peaceful, unperturbed
3 devoid of or making no stir ... **syn**...

where only sense **2** of **still** is the secondary entry of **calm 1**.

If a main-entry **syn** list contains more than ten terms (as at **notable n 1**), the secondary entries cross-referred to that main entry include only nine synonyms selected from the entire list. This space-saving convention is illustrated at

high-muck-a-muck n syn NOTABLE 1, big boy, || big cheese, || big chief, big shot, || big wheel, bigwig, mugwump, nabob, VIP

where nine synonyms of the thirty-four at the main entry have been selected for inclusion at the secondary entry.

Main and Secondary Entries: Elements Common to Both

All, some, or none of the following lists may appear at both main and secondary entries in this order: related words, idiomatic equivalents, contrasted words, and antonyms.

The boldface abbreviation **rel** introduces a list of related words. The related words – words that are almost but not quite synonymous with the headword – are included at an entry next after the synonym list. For example, at the main entry

splendid *adj*...
2 extraordinarily or transcendently impressive ...
syn glorious, gorgeous, magnificent, proud, resplendent, splendiferous, splendorous, sublime, superb
rel eminent, illustrious; grand, impressive, lavish, luxurious, royal, sumptuous; divine,

exquisite, lovely; incomparable, matchless, peerless, superlative, supreme, unparalleled, unsurpassed; surpassing, transcendent

the **rel** list is composed of twenty terms separated into five subgroups that each share a common likeness or relation with the headword and its synonyms. On the other hand, at the secondary entry

splendiferous *adj* **syn** SPLENDID 2, ...

rel dazzling, marvelous; smashing, walloping; rattling, ripping, screaming, terrific

three subgroups of eight terms were selected as being distinctively related to *splendiferous* rather than to the whole synonym group in the context indicated by the **syn** cross-reference to **splendid 2**. Related words appearing at a main entry are not ordinarily repeated at the secondary entries. The user should therefore check the main entry when seeking the most complete groupings of related words. Related words as such are not entered in boldface at their own alphabetical places. They may, of course, be synonyms in other lists or head their own main entries.

The boldface italic abbreviation **idiom** introduces a list of idiomatic equivalents that are essentially the same in meaning as the members of a synonym group. An **idiom** list at a main entry includes phrases that are generally pertinent to the entire **syn** list and the headword, as the ones at

speak *vb* **1** to articulate words in order to express thoughts ...

syn talk, utter, verbalize, vocalize, voice

rel...

idiom break silence, give voice (*or* tongue *or* utterance) to, let fall, make public (*or* known), open one's mouth (*or* lips), put in (*or* into) words, say one's say, speak one's piece

while a secondary-entry list, as the one at

retaliate *vb* **syn** RECIPROCATE, recompense, requite, return

rel...

idiom even the score, get back at, get even with, give in kind, give one a dose of his own medicine, give one tit for tat, pay one in his own coin, settle (*or* square) accounts, turn the tables on

features idioms that are particularly appropriate equivalents of its headword in the context indicated by the **syn** cross-reference. Idiomatic equivalents, including those fixed verb + preposition combinations that function as idioms rather than as literal meanings of the verb, are not entered in

boldface at their own alphabetical places in this book.

The boldface italic abbreviation **con** introduces a list of contrasted words – words that are strongly contrastable but not quite antonymous with the headword – that may appear at an entry:

watchful *adj* paying close attention usually with a view to anticipating approaching danger or opportunity ...

syn...

rel...

idiom...

con careless, heedless, thoughtless; inadvertent; absentminded, abstracted, faraway

alert *adj* **1 syn** WATCHFUL, open-eyed, unsleeping, vigilant, wakeful, wide-awake

rel...

idiom...

con inattentive, unmindful; aloof, detached, indifferent, unconcerned

At the main entry **watchful** *adj* the **con** list is composed of seven words separated into three subgroups that each share at least one aspect of contrast to the headword and its **syn** list, while the **con** list at the secondary entry **alert 1** comprises six words separated into two such subgroups. Contrasted words appearing at a main entry are not ordinarily repeated at the secondary entries. The thesaurus user should therefore check the main entry when seeking the most complete groupings of contrasted words. Contrasted words as such are not entered in boldface at their own alphabetical places. They may, of course, be synonyms in other lists or head their own main entries.

The boldface italic abbreviation **ant** introduces the last possible element of a main or secondary entry: an antonym or list of antonyms, as at the entry

perfect *adj...* **2...**

ant imperfect

or at the entry

quiet *adj...* **4** not showy or obtrusive ...

ant gaudy, loud

When antonyms are drawn from more than one of the accepted classes of opposites, members of the groups are separated by semicolons, as at the entry

assistance *n* **syn** HELP 1, aid, assist, comfort, hand, lift, relief, secours, succor, support
rel...
con...
ant impediment, impeding;
obstructing, obstruction

Like related and contrasted words, antonyms as such are not entered in boldface at their own alphabetical places. They may, of course, be synonyms in other lists or head their own main entries.

Main and Secondary Entries: The One Arbitrary Rule

Ideally, a book such as this should be free of all arbitrary restraints and curtailments. In practice, however, its editors found that one rule was essential: *No word may appear in more than one list at a main or secondary entry.* For example, *nice* is a synonym at **pleasant** *adj* **1**. The applicable sense of *nice* is found in Webster's Third New International Dictionary at the entry ¹ **nice**... *adj*... **7**(binding substitute) + **7b**, where the definitions are

: pleasant and satisfying: as ... **b** :ENJOYABLE, PLEASING, DELIGHTFUL < a *nice* time at the party > < *nice* and warm by the fire > < we have four *nice* bedrooms upstairs to make them comfortable—Willa Cather >

However, one might reasonably construe senses **7e** (: MILD, CLEMENT, PLEASING < the *nice* weather of late spring > < the *nice* old days of the past >) and **7g** (:FITTING, APPROPRIATE, SUITABLE < the *nice* clothes she wears > < not a *nice* word for use in church >) as a basis for entering *nice* as a related word as well as a synonym at **pleasant** **1**, while sense **8** in Webster's Third New International Dictionary

: most inappropriate :UNPLEASANT, UNATTRACTIVE, TREACHEROUS — used ironically < a chronic alcoholic is certainly a *nice* one to talk about temperance > < a *nice* friend, who would have me ... cover myself with eternal infamy — J.A. Froude > < got himself in a *nice* fix >

could be construed as evidence for entering *nice* as both a contrasted word and an antonym at **pleasant** **1**. Obviously, the thesaurus user would not be helped by an entry showing any word in such an involved relationship with itself.

Labels, Punctuation, and Symbols

Labels Words that are labeled *cap* or *usu* [ally] *cap* in Webster's Third New International Dictionary are capitalized in this book. Thus, the synonyms *Gehenna*, *Pandemonium*, *Sheol*, and *Tophet* are so styled at the main entry **hell** *n* as are the related words *Styx* and *Tartarus*. A term that is capitalized in a main-entry **syn** list is also capitalized when it appears as a boldface secondary entry at its own alphabetical position:

Gehenna *n syn* HELL , ...

If only one entered sense of a word is capitalized, an italic *cap* label followed by a boldface capitalized subhead is attached to the affected sense:

pandemonium *n* **1 cap Pandemonium syn** HELL, ...
2 syn SINK 1, ...
3 syn DIN, ...

In addition to the part-of-speech label, an italic plural label may be added when a word or a sense of a word is sometimes, often, usually, or always used in the plural. Typical examples of these labels are found at

years *n pl syn* OLD AGE, age, caducity, elderliness, senectitude, senescence

where *pl* indicates that the headword **years** is always plural in form and construction in this particular application, and at

road *n* **1 often roads pl syn** HARBOR 3, anchorage, || chuck, harborage, haven, port, riding, roadstead
2 syn WAY 1, artery, avenue, boulevard, || drag, highway, path, street, thoroughfare, track
3 syn WAY 2, course, line, passage, path, route

where sense **1** (and only that sense) of the headword **road** is often but not always used in the plural, and at

minutia *n, usu minutiae pl* **1 syn** INS AND OUTS, ropes
2 syn TRIVIA, small beer, small change, small potato(es), triviality

where the label preceding both senses indicates that the headword **minutia** is usually used in the plural in both of these applications, and at the main entry

trivia *n pl but sometimes sing in constr*

where the label is qualified to show that this plural noun may sometimes be used with a singular verb, and at

common *n* **1 commons** *pl but sing or pl in constr* **syn** COMMONALTY, commonage, commoners, common men, people, plebeians, plebs, populace, rank and file, third estate

which indicates that **common** occurs as a plural noun in sense **1** but may occur with either singular or plural verbs, and at

outdoors *n pl but sing in constr* the space where air is unconfined < every night he let the dog run in the *outdoors* >

whose label indicates that while the word *outdoors* is a plural noun, it consistently takes a singular verb. Use of these labels conforms to the treatment of plurals in Webster's Third New International Dictionary.

An italic subject guide phrase pointing to something with which the headword is associated may precede a meaning core in a very few instances, as at

set *vb...* **11** *of a fowl* to incubate eggs by crouching upon them ...

Punctuation A comma links items (as synonyms, idiomatic equivalents, members of a single group or subgroup of related or contrasted words or of antonyms) that are alike in their relation to the headword, as at

conservative *adj...* **2...**

syn controlled, discreet, moderate, reasonable, restrained, temperate, unexcessive, unextreme

rel cautious, chary, wary; circumspect, politic, proper, prudent

con expansive, unconstrained; excessive, freewheeling, uncontrolled, unrestrained

A semicolon signals a break in continuity and is used in **rel** and **con** lists (as between the two subgroups in the **rel** and **con** lists at **conservative 2** above) to separate subgroups of words which differ in their relation to the headword. A semicolon is also used to separate antonyms that belong to different classes of opposites, as

arise *vb* **1 syn** RISE 4, ascend, aspire, lift, mount, soar, up, uprear

ant recline; slump

where the two antonyms are so separated. A semicolon may also appear at

the end of a main-entry **syn** list to introduce a compare cross-reference, as shown at **honorable** *adj* **1**:

syn estimable, high-principled, noble, sterling, worthy; *compare* VENERABLE **1**

Parentheses enclose variant spellings, as at the main entry **cake** *vb* **1** where

encrust (*or* incrust)

is a synonym, and at the secondary entries, where that particular synonym is styled

encrust (*or* **incrust**) *vb* **syn** CAKE **1**, ...

Parentheses also enclose a particle or particles usually associated with a base word, as

adore *vb*... **3**to love, admire, or enjoy excessively ...
syn dote (on *or* upon), idolize, worship

dote (on *or* upon) *vb* **syn** ADORE **3**, ...

Similarly, parentheses may indicate usage alternatives in idiomatic expressions, as at **slavery** *n* **2**where

idiom the yoke (*or* chains) of slavery

alerts the user that he may choose one of two noun elements when employing this particular idiom. Parentheses are also used in main-entry **syn** lists to enclose plural suffixes of words that are sometimes, often, or usually but not always used in the plural:

scad *n, usu* **scads** *pl* a great number or abundance ...
syn gob(s), heap, jillion, load(s), million, oodles, quantities, ...

Parentheses enclose material indicating a typical or, occasionally, a sole object of reference, as in the meaning core of **express** *vb* **2**

to give expression to (as a thought, an opinion, or an emotion)

where they enclose an adjunct, or at entries such as **abrogate** *vb* **2**

ant establish, fix (*as a right, a quality, or a custom*)

where an antonym or a group of antonyms are associated with a particular object or objects of reference — a restriction or limitation to which the thesaurus user should be alerted.

Symbols Two warning symbols are used in this book: the asterisk * and the double bars ||.

The asterisk prefixes terms that are generally or often considered vulgar and that are appropriately stigmatized in Webster's Third New International Dictionary. Examples of such terms may be found at the main entries **fool** *n* **1** and **nonsense** *n* **2**. If an asterisk prefixes a term in a main-entry **syn** list, it also prefixes that term at its secondary entry. When only one sense of an entry is considered vulgar, the asterisk precedes only the affected sense of the entry.