

Guide to the *New SOED*

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Preface

This CD-ROM version of the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (New SOED)* incorporates changes to the database of the 1993 printed text designed to suit it better to the electronic medium. Foremost among these is the removal of space-saving conventions which could obscure the existence or location of included lexical items. Thus the string *cream cake* could not be identified electronically in the book's entry **cream bun, cake**, which now appears explicitly as **cream bun, cream cake**; the word *metapsychic* could not be automatically extrapolated from the printed text's **metapsychic(al)**, for which **metapsychic, metapsychical** has been substituted; **know or learn the ropes** has become **know the ropes, learn the ropes**; *self-caricature* is isolated from *self-advocacy, -caricature*; and so on. Thousands of extra items can now appear individually in the CD's indexes.

To accompany the introduction of a Language filter, some names have been standardized, and language names in etymologies have been distinguished where the same form could refer to nationality (so that, for instance, Italian painters are not identified as Italian words). To speed the use of the labels filter, the number of individual labels has been reduced, by regularizing forms having essentially the same reference or meaning.

In addition, over 10,000 localized changes have been made to the text, mainly in response to observations and suggestions made by users since publication. Though representing genuine improvements, for reasons of space and cost some 8,000 of these will probably not find their way into the current edition of the *New SOED* in book form.

The book was a replacement for the third edition of the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, but does not represent a direct revision of its text. The *New SOED* editors returned to the *Oxford English Dictionary* itself (in later stages the second edition of 1989, originally the first edition of 1884-1928 and its four-volume *Supplement* of 1972-86), and reabridged, conflated, revised, restructured, added, and updated. Every entry was written afresh, taking into account the linguistic evidence of the Dictionary Department's extensive quotation files and computer databases. Many new words and senses were added, and all were reviewed in the light of social and political changes.

A more strictly chronological basis for entry structure is adopted than in previous editions (which followed the *OED* more directly). Senses within major semantic and grammatical units are arranged according to the period or date range within which the first known example of each falls (for the definition of date ranges used see [4.8 Dates](#)). In many cases dates are at variance with those in the *OED* because earlier and later examples have now been identified. For the *New SOED*, researchers systematically scrutinized historical dictionaries such as the *Middle English Dictionary* (in progress in Ann Arbor, Michigan), the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, the *Scottish National Dictionary*, the *Dictionary of American English*, and the *Dictionary of Americanisms*, looking for examples which would affect dates or descriptive labels. New information was sought in other known relevant publications, such as JYrgen SchŠfer's *Documentation in the O.E.D.* and articles in *Notes and Queries*. Unresolved first dates in the *OED* were pursued and clarified. Several million paper slips in the English Dictionary Department's files were scanned for individual antedatings or postdatings. The editors of the *Middle English Dictionary* further provided some information from their drafts of later parts of the alphabet which have not yet been published, and a number of unpublished earlier uses were verified in the files of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*. New significant information will continue to come to light, but every effort was made to present the most accurate and up-to-date record possible at the time of going to press.

The *New SOED* is founded in the *OED*, and shares its coverage of many words and senses from North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and elsewhere within the English-speaking world. Many of the entries for recent vocabulary were based on unpublished additions prepared by members of the *OED*'s New Words section.

The main senses of the headwords are illustrated by 83,000 quotations, drawn from the Dictionary Department's quotation files and computerized databases. Their primary function here is to illuminate semantic distinctions and exemplify possible grammatical constructions. Defined phrases and

combinations, and derivatives and minor words related to a headword, cannot receive such expansive treatment and are not illustrated. Where possible and historically appropriate, modern sources have been used, but real examples are notoriously ambiguous or resistant to intelligible abridgement, and the undeniable quotability of Defoe, Macaulay, and Dickens has ensured the use of many earlier quotations directly from the *OED*.

Pronunciations are provided in symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet, and represent a style of British Received Pronunciation. Coverage of the wide regional, social, and other differences in spoken English in Britain and throughout the world would require more space and a more complex technical apparatus than would be suitable, given the emphases and intended non-specialist readership of the *New SOED*.

Editorial work on this completely new edition of the *SOED* began in 1980, with a build-up of staff from late 1983. Until well into the letter I, entries were handwritten on 6-by-4-inch paper slips. Then in 1987 the availability of the second edition of the *OED* in electronic form prompted a radical revision of editorial procedures. A complex specification was drawn up for the automatic modification of the *OED* text: certain categories of entry and types of information were omitted, senses and structural units were reordered, old-fashioned modes of expression were modified, and many other changes were made to bring it closer to the spirit and style of the *New SOED*. This provisional abridged and transformed *OED* was made a reality as an electronic database and in proofed paper form on editors' desks by members of the Reference Computing team at Oxford University Press and members of the Centre for the New *OED* at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. Thereafter a team of keyboarders made the lexicographers' substantial alterations and additions directly to the central database.

Meanwhile International Computaprint Corporation (ICC) in Pennsylvania, who had undertaken data-capture of the second edition of the *OED*, keyed the handwritten slips for *A* to *interwreath*, converting their conventional typographical mark-up into a generic form which identified the start and end points of the many different elements of dictionary structure. The tagging of the output was then refined and enhanced by programs written within OUP. Soon the sections of dictionary text produced by such contrasting means were formally indistinguishable.

Almost every member of the lexicographical team took part in the first round of editing. Proofs of the results were sent out to advisers for criticisms and suggestions, and many individual entries were also submitted to subject specialists. Comments from both these sources were then fed into a revision of the whole text by senior lexicographers. But for the requirement of publication, this revision could have continued for ever.

A project of the size and duration of the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* inevitably draws upon the time and expertise of members of many different departments within Oxford University Press. The editors thank them all. In particular the Reference Computing team helped transform working methods and perceptions and provided the support to sustain the transformation. From outside the organization we wish to mention Hazel Wright and Deborah Honorž, for general critical reading of the text; Dr Clive Upton, for advising on pronunciation and checking phonetic transcriptions; G. Elizabeth Blake, for the programs for preliminary shortening of the *OED*; Julia Cresswell, for historical research in published materials; Ralph Bates, for bibliographical and other library research; Lidie Howes and Barbara Grant, for information from the *Middle English Dictionary* materials; Lorna Pike, for quotations from the *DOST* collections; Helen De Witt, Sara Hawker, Rachel James, Marcia Slater, Jerry Spring, Jeremy Trevett, Penny Trumble, Penny Waddell, Carl Watson, Seren Wildwood, and Jane Windebank, for data-capture and structural tagging; Patricia Moore, for this and on-line regularization of stylistic inconsistencies; Fabia Claris, Louise Keegan, Christina Malkowski-Zaba, Helen Marriage, Margaret McKay, and Coralie O'Gorman, for proofreading and checking of underlying structure; Dorothy McCarthy, for establishing proofreading procedures; Patricia Greene, Lisa Johnston, and Sandy Vaughan, for cross-reference checking; Fred Gill and Peter Gibbs, for checking final page-proofs; Peter Robinson, Catherine Bates, Stephen Shepherd, Lynda Mugglestone, Alexandra Barratt, and Rod McConchie, particularly for searching files for dating and usage information; Margaret Davies, for file-searching and research for the list of authors and publications; Philippa Berry, for work on the authors' list and for identifying potential cross-references for inclusion; Clare Todd, particularly for research for the authors' list, for identifying

cross-references, and for quotation abridgement and copying; Kate Batchelor, Mary Burns, and Katie Weale, for quotation copying and for other clerical and administrative help; Colinette Dorey, for file-searching and for filing and clerical help; Kay Pepler, particularly for keying information for the authors' list; Clare Senior, for clerical and filing assistance; Carol Percy, for bibliographical research; Anna Taylor, for distributing proofs. At various earlier stages of the project Karen Cooper, Hania Porucznik, and Annabella Duckit were project administrative assistants, and M. A. Mabe, K. Atherton, and M. C. Palmer contributed to early editorial work.

For specific advice on particular languages and areas of knowledge, we are indebted to Mrs A.J. Allott, Dr Philip Baker, Mr David Barrett, Professor Tomàs de Bhaldraithe, Mr R. J. Bowater, Dr Savile Bradbury, Dr Jean Branford, Mr David Bunker, Mr Andrew Burrows, Miss Penelope Byrde, Dr Stanley Chapman, Mr Howard Colvin, Mr Yassin Dutton, Mr Colin Dyson, Mr Elwyn Hartley Edwards, Mr D. H. Fowler, Mr J. B. Franks, Mr Alan J. Gamble, Professor Bryan Garner, Dr Ives Goddard, Mr No'l Goodwin, Mrs Judy Gray, Dr Anne Grinter, Dr P. T. Harries, Mr Andrew Hawke, Professor Tony Honorč, Mr Simon James, Dr W. J. Johnson, Dr Russell Jones, the late Mr Peter Kemp, Professor Harriet Klein, Dr Ann Lackie, M. Pierre-Yves Lambert, Professor J. D. Latham, Professor G. L. Lewis, Professor Robert E. Lewis, Dr Andrew Louth, Professor J. B. McMillan, Dr C. M. MacRobert, Dr F. H. C. Marriott, Professor P. H. Matthews, Dr M. J. Morris, Mr James Mosley, Professor P. Nailor, Mr David Parlett, Professor Andrew Pawley, Ms Jenny Putin, Dr D. A. Roe, Dr H. M. Rosenberg, Captain A. B. Sainsbury, Dr Geoff Sharman, Mr Jonathan Spencer, Professor N. S. Sutherland, Professor M. Twyman, Professor J. O. Urmson, Professor Geza Vermes, Miss Freda Walker, Lord Walton of Detchant, Mr Harry D. Watson, Ms Niki Watts, Dr M. Weitzman, Mr Ken Whyld, Mr Thomas Woodcock, Professor Clifford Wright, Mrs Hazel Wright, and Dr R. David Zorc.

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May 1996

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1 Introduction

The *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* is a historical dictionary of modern English. It sets out the main meanings and semantic developments of words current at any time between 1700 and the present day: those which have been in regular literary or colloquial use at some point in their history; slang or dialect words which are nevertheless likely to be generally encountered through accessible literature or the modern mass media; and in addition a wide range of scientific and technical words such as may be of interest to serious amateurs or advanced students. Every headword is traced back to the time of its first known use, however early, in many cases to the manuscript records of the Old and Middle English periods.

Words which have fallen into disuse during the past three centuries are included if they meet the other general criteria. Words which became obsolete before 1700 appear if they are significant in the formation or history of some other headword in the text, or if they remain familiar from the works of Shakespeare, the 1611 Authorized Version of the Bible, and a small number of other influential literary sources (notably the poems of John Milton and Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*).

2 The dictionary entry

2.1 Types of entry

2.2. Ordering of entries

2.1 Types of entry

There are four basic types of entry in this dictionary: standard entries, combining entries, letter entries, and variant entries.

2.1.1 Standard entries

The majority of entries are standard entries. In these the headword, or word being defined, does not belong to any of the other three entry types below. The typical standard entry has a headword, pronunciation (in the International Phonetic Alphabet), part of speech (in *italic*), date (expressed as a period of part of a century), etymology (in square brackets []), and definition section. The definition section may be accompanied by one or more paragraphs containing illustrative quotations, phrases which contain the headword, compounds whose first element is the headword, or derivatives consisting of the headword and a suffix. Usage indicators (labels), variant spellings, and grammatical or other information may also appear in the entry. More information on all these features is given in [section 4](#).

2.1.2 Combining entries

In these entries the headword either begins or ends with a hyphen, and in use generally occurs joined to another word (either hyphenated or as a solid word). Combining entries include affixes of three types: suffixes (like *-ly*, *-ness*), prefixes (like *re-*, *un-*), and combining forms (like *hyper-*, *kilo-*). See further under [section 6](#).

2.1.3 Letter entries

Each letter of the alphabet has an entry which contains a brief account of the history of the letter and a selection of abbreviations and acronyms which begin with that letter. See further under [section 7](#).

2.1.4 Variant entries

A variant entry refers an alternative spelling or grammatical form of a headword to the standard or combining entry with the main form and all other information. See further under [section 8](#).

2.2 Ordering of entries

Entries are accessed in strict alphabetical order. Those with hyphens or spaces follow otherwise identical words written solid; a headword with an accent or diacritic over a letter follows one consisting of the same sequence of letters without. Capital and lower-case letters are regarded as equivalent. Strict alphabetical order applies also to prefixes of titles and names (such as *Mc-*, *St* (saint)) which in other contexts may conventionally be placed elsewhere.

The order of headwords which are spelled the same way but have different parts of speech is as follows:

noun	(abbreviated <i>n.</i>)
pronoun	(abbreviated <i>pron.</i>)
adjective	(abbreviated <i>a.</i>)
verb	(abbreviated <i>v.</i>)
adverb	(abbreviated <i>adv.</i>)
preposition	(abbreviated <i>prep.</i>)
conjunction	(abbreviated <i>conj.</i>)
interjection	(abbreviated <i>int.</i>)
prefix/combining form	(abbreviated <i>pref./comb. form</i>)
suffix	(abbreviated <i>suff.</i>)

Entries are positioned in the headword sequence by their first part of speech. The order of headwords with the same spelling and the same (first) part of speech is chronological (according to date ranges: see [4.8](#)), with variant entries following any full entries: see [4.4](#).

Subcategorizations of parts of speech, such as participial (*ppl*) of adjectives, verbal (*vbl*) of nouns, or personal (*pers.*) of pronouns, are disregarded in determining entry order.

3 Possible locations of a word or phrase

Any defined or listed word or phrase will appear in one of the individual indexes. These can be combined in various ways, and every item treated in the dictionary will be found in the All text index.

A simple word is likely to be in the obvious alphabetical place in the main sequence of entries and will be listed in the Headwords index.

A word formed from a prefix or a combining form (as *dis-*, *Euro-*) may be included in the entry for that prefix or combining form. It may be listed (in italics) undated as an example there, in which case it will appear in the Uses and References index, or be in a paragraph of more fully treated items with dates, when it will be in the Derivatives index.

A word ending with a suffix (as *-ly*, *-ness*) may be included at the end of the entry for the word from which it is derived. For example, *befitting* appears under **benefit** *v.*, *disclosing* under **disclose** *v.*, and *lancelike* and *lacity* under **lace** *n. & a.*: none would be found in its own alphabetical place or the Headwords index. Such words will be found in the Derivatives index.

A phrase, combination, or other compound may be included in a paragraph in the entry for one of the words which it contains. For example, *three cheers* and *sling mud* are respectively under **cheer** *n.*¹ and **mud** *n.*

¹, *colour-blind* is under **colour** *n.*, and *infant prodigy* is under **infant** *n.*

¹& *a.* These defined items are listed in the Phrases and Compound Words index. Sometimes an entry for one word in a phrase or compound will contain a cross-reference to one of the other elements, under which the definition will be found. Such cross-references are recorded in the Uses and References index. Two-word compounds are more likely to be defined in the entry for their first element. For further information see [4.14](#).

Sometimes a word very similar to another included as a headword, especially if it is an uncommon or obsolete word, may be included in the derivative block at the end of the entry for the other word. These will be in the Derivatives index. (See [4.16](#) for more information on derivatives.)

An acronym or an abbreviation, particularly pronounced as a set of initials and not as a word, may be under the entry for the letter it begins with. For example *LAN*, *l.b.w.*, and *Lincs.* are under **L**, *l*, *RIP* is under **R**, *r*: these are in the Abbreviations index. On the other hand the likes of **ANZAC** and **Nimby** are main entries in their own alphabetical places and so in the Headwords index.

4 The features of a standard dictionary entry

This topic describes the elements which may appear in a standard dictionary entry, in the order in which they most usually occur. Some, such as labels or phrases, can occur in several places: this is mentioned, and the range of places indicated, in the topic on the feature in question. Many of the characteristics of standard entries are shared by the other types of dictionary entry.

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4.1 Headword

Every entry opens with a headword, the word whose meaning, etymology, history, pronunciation, etc., are the subject of the entry.

If the headword is obsolete (i.e. no longer in use in current English) it is preceded by a dagger: †.

If the headword is a word (or phrase) which, although used in English, is still regarded as essentially foreign, it appears in italics. In their normal contexts such items are often written or printed in light italics or within quotation marks, and many may still usually be pronounced in a foreign way.

Where a word has more than one spelling, the spelling used for the headword is usually the one regarded as the dominant or preferred current form. Other spellings may be given later in the entry, as variants (see [4.6](#)). Historical considerations occasionally require a form which is less usual for some senses to be chosen as the headword, but in such cases current usage is made clear.

4.2 Pronunciation

4.2.1

The pronunciations shown are those which can safely be regarded as allowable in British English at the present time, within the form of received pronunciation that does not give rise to any negative social judgement when heard by most native speakers. An attempt has been made to represent the English spoken by the current generation, older forms being discarded where necessary, but absence of a variant need not indicate that it is completely unacceptable, and the order of variants need not be one of decreasing frequency.

Pronunciations are given, between slashes, in the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The symbols and conventions used are intended to provide sufficient information for accurate production of the appropriate sounds, without needless detail.

4.2.2 Vowels

In a conventional vowel diagram (representing the position and degree of raising of the tongue in articulating each sound), the vowel symbols used in this dictionary appear as follows:

	Front	Central	Back
High	i y		u
	ɪ		ʊ
	e ɜ	ə	
Mid	E ɝ	ʌ	ɔ
		ɒ	
Low	a		ɑ ɒ

Lengthening is indicated by :

Nasality is indicated by the superscript diacritic ~

The front vowels with lip-rounding, /y/, /ɪ/

/ɪ/, and /

ɝ /, occur only in words which are not fully naturalized. See further the Key to the Pronunciation.

The English vowel sounds are

Short		Long	
a	as in cat	æ	as in arm
E	bed	ɛ	her
ɪ	sit	i:	see
i	cosy	ɔ	saw
ɒ	hot	u:	too
ʌ	run	ɛ	hair
ʊ	put		
ə	ago		

Diphthongs

ɪ	as in	my	ɪ @	tire
aʊ		how	aʊ @	sour
eɪ		day		
@əʊ		no		
ɪ @		near		
ɔɪ		boy		
ʊ @		poor		

4.2.3 Consonants and semivowels

The following sounds are recorded in this dictionary:

Plosives: p, b, t, d, k, g

Fricatives: f, v, ʃ, ʒ, s, z, ʒ, ʒ, x, h

Affricates: tʃ, dʒ

Liquids and nasals: l, F, m, n, J, N r

Semivowels: j, w, H

Of these, 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	as in	get
tʃ		chip
dʒ		jar
ŋ		ring
θ		thin
ð		this
ʃ		she
ʒ		vision
j		yes

in some Scottish and foreign words

x as in lo**ch**, German **ach**;

and only in respect of words which are not fully naturalized

ç	as in	German nicht
ʎ	as in	Spanish ll or Italian gl in <i>gli</i>
ɲ	as in	Spanish ñ , French gn , Italian gn in <i>gnocco</i>
H	as in	French nuit .

See further the [list of phonetics](#).

4.2.4

Primary stress is indicated by superscript ' before the stressed syllable, secondary stress by subscript ˈ. Primary stress is shown for words with two or more syllables; secondary stress only where its marking is

needed to avoid doubt. Word stress is not a significant feature of the French language, and no stress is marked in words retaining a true French pronunciation. See further 4.2.6 below.

4.2.5

Unstressed vowels are reduced to /ə/ unless they are likely to have their full phonetic value when the word is pronounced in isolation.

4.2.6

Optional sounds, sometimes pronounced, sometimes not, are enclosed within round brackets.

E.g. **prompt** /prɒm(p)t/
delivery /

dɪ'lɪv(ə)ri/.

The bracketing of schwa, (ə), before /

l/, /

m/, and /

n/ shows that these consonants are often syllabic in the words concerned.

4.2.7

An explicit pronunciation is given for a derivative only if it differs in some unpredictable way from that of the headword or from that usual in combination with the suffix in question. If the derivative bears primary stress on a different syllable from the headword (and consequently has a predictably different pronunciation) this is indicated by a primary stress mark before the stressed syllable within the actual form; any secondary stress is assumed to fall on the syllable bearing primary stress in the headword unless otherwise marked.

E.g. (s.v. **falsify**) **falsifiable** bears no stress mark so is stressed like *falsify* on the first syllable, but **falsi,fiability** has a different stress pattern and so the stress marks are given.

Among predictable changes associated with the position of primary stress are

ə or (

ə) →

a in nouns in *-ality* formed from adjectives in *-al* (e.g. **practi'cality** and not the full phonetic transcription /praktɪ'kallɪ/ is given under **practical** /

'praktɪ'k(ə)l/);

aʊ or

a(ʊ) →

ɔ in derivatives of combining forms in *-o* or words formed from them (e.g. **ma'cropterous** and not the full phonetic transcription /

ma'krɔpt(ə)r(ə)/ is given under **macro-** /

'makr(ə)/).

A final *-r* is pronounced in derivatives formed with a suffix beginning with a vowel.

E.g. **authoress** under **author** /'ɔ:tə/ is to be understood as /

'ɔ:tərs/.

cellarage under **cellar** /

'sɛlə/ is to be understood as /

'sɛləɪdʒ/.

An exception to this is the suffix *-ed*, which results in a pronunciation /ɛd/ not /

-@@ / after /

@/.

The pronunciation of *-icity* in derivatives of adjectives in *-ic* (/ - lk/) is /

- l@ti /.

4.2.8

A second or subsequent pronunciation is often abbreviated so as to show just the part where it differs from the first; the same applies to pronunciations of variant or inflected forms.

4.2.9

An alternative non-Anglicized pronunciation may be given for a word which is largely but not fully naturalized. Such pronunciations are preceded by *foreign*. The first (or only) pronunciation of any non-naturalized word, phrase, or form (in italic) from one of the more familiar modern European languages will represent the foreign pronunciation but will have no specifying label. A second or subsequent fully Anglicized pronunciation will often be given.

4.2.10

A hyphen may be used in a phonetic transcription to clarify or emphasize that the divided sounds are to be separately pronounced, for example where they could be mistaken for a diphthong or single affricate, or where // is repeated when *-less* or *-ly* is added to a word ending in *-l*.

E.g. **Mazdaism** / "m@d@z@z(@m /
potsherd /

"p@ - S@d /

drolly /

"dr@l - li /

moralless /

"m@r(@l - l@s /.

Most often, however, hyphens simply open or close truncated pronunciations.

4.2.11

Additional examples of words illustrating particular sounds are to be found in the [list of phonetic characters](#).

4.3 Part of speech

A part of speech is given for all entries, except letter entries. It appears in italics, in abbreviated form (see [2.2](#) and the [abbreviations list](#)), after the pronunciation, or after the headword if no pronunciation is shown.

All the parts of speech of a headword are listed at the beginning of an entry, e.g. *a. & adv.; n., a., & v.* Sometimes parts of speech are treated together, but more often they are in separate sections, in which case each section is headed with a capital initial followed by the part(s) of speech being treated in that section, e.g. **A** *n.*, **B** *adj.*

Plurals of abbreviated parts of speech are usually formed by the simple addition of -s, but for clarity *a.* becomes *adjs.* After sense numbers, and in some other contexts (especially when in the same font as adjacent text), *adj.* is also preferred to *a.* for 'adjective'.

If the headword consists of two or more separate words, it may be specified as a phrase (*phr.*). For example, *n. phr.*, or *adv. phr.*, or (when parts of speech are combined) *n. & a. phr.*

If the headword is a verb, the part of speech may be followed by an indication of the verb's transitivity (e.g. *v.i.*, *v.t.*). For more information about transitivity see [4.11.1](#).

Parts of speech are also given for some of the items in combination and other subentry blocks (see [4.14](#)) and for derivatives (see [4.16](#)).

4.4 Homonyms

If two or more headwords have the same spelling and part of speech, but each has a different origin and meaning, the headwords are homonyms. They are distinguished by a superscript number after the relevant part of speech. In this dictionary, homonyms include headwords whose only difference is an initial capital, but not headwords which differ in respect of hyphenation, spacing, or letters with accents or diacritics. If the first part of speech of two or more homonyms is the same, the entries are numbered in chronological order (according to date range: see [4.8](#)). If successive entries have more than one part of speech, homonym numbers of later parts of speech are allocated in the order in which the entries appear in the entry sequence. E.g. if *n.*¹ & *a.*

¹ is followed by *n.*

² & *a.*

², it is to be understood that the second noun is recorded later (or at least no earlier) than the first, but nothing is implied about the relative first dates of the adjectives. Homonyms which are variant entries follow all standard- or combining-entry homonyms of the same (first) part of speech.

E.g. **cupper** ... *n.*¹ ... ME.

cupper ... *n.*

² ... E20.

cupper *n.*

³ var. of **CUPPA**.

Only the simple part of speech is relevant in allocating homonym numbers. Qualifications such as *vbl* and *ppl* are disregarded (cf. last paragraph of [2.2](#)).

E.g. **picking** *n.*¹

picking *vbl n.*

²

In cross-references to combining entries the part of speech is omitted and the homonym number is attached to the small-capital form, e.g. -er¹, -y

⁶.

4.5 Labels and symbols

4.5.1 Subject and status labels

Restrictions in the usage of words or senses are frequently conveyed by the use of labels (usually in italic). These can show restriction to the English of a particular geographical area (e.g. *dial.*, *Sc.*, *US*, *Austral.*), to a specific style or register of language (e.g. *colloq.*, *poet.*, *slang*), to a particular branch of knowledge or field of activity (e.g. *Cricket*, *Her.*, *Law*, *Naut.*), or can denote frequency or extent of use (e.g. *rare*).

Subject labels precede any definition (or partial definition) or any variant spelling or form to which they apply. (If they apply to a complete entry they therefore follow the etymology.)

E.g. **infauna** /ɪnˈfɑːnə/ *n.* E20. [...] **Zool.** The animal life ...
(s.v. **acetic** *a.*) **1 Chem.** *acetic acid*, a weak acid ...
(s.v. **colour** *n.*) **8 Mining.** (A particle of) gold. M19.
(s.v. **occlude** *v.*) **5 v.i.** *Meteorol.* Of a front ...

Geographical, stylistic, and frequency labels (together here referred to as ‘status labels’) applying to the whole entry appear at the top of the entry after the part of speech.

E.g. **peripheral** /pɪˈfɪəriəl/ *a.* *rare*. L17.

In a main definition section a status label applying to a complete dated sense follows the definition and immediately precedes the date.

E.g. (s.v. **chip** *v.* 9) **b v.t.** Tease, chaff. *colloq.* L19.

Within dated senses, a status label applying to only part of a definition generally precedes that part to which it applies. If the definition has formal divisions (as **a**, **b**, etc.) the label always precedes the part it qualifies; if there is no formal division, the label follows the first part of the definition but precedes any later parts.

E.g. (s.v. **overlander** *n.*) **1** A person who journeyed from one part of Australia to another (*obs.* exc. *Hist.*); a person who drives livestock overland; *slang* a tramp.

In subentries (as compounds or derivatives) labels of any kind precede the relevant definition or partial definition.

E.g. (s.v. **base** *n.* 1) **base hit** *Baseball* a hit enabling the batter to reach a base safely.
(s.v. **local** *a.*) **local talent** the talented people or (*colloq.*) the attractive women or men of a particular locality.
(s.v. **puppet** *a. & n.*) **puppetish** *a.* (*rare*) pertaining to ...
(s.v. **jessed**) wearing jesses; *Her.* having jesses of a specified tincture.

Status labels precede any variant spelling or form to which they apply.

E.g. **kiln** /kɪln/ *n. & v.* Also (now *Sc.*) **kill** ...

Interests of clarity may produce some variation of label positioning, particularly in subentries and individual parts of definitions.

Labels can be combined with other labels, of either the same or a different type. Combined subject and status labels are positioned as for the latter. Labels can also be qualified by words like ‘Now’ or ‘Only’.

E.g. **Now** *rare* or *obs.*
Somewhat *derog.*

Chiefly *US*.
obs. exc. Hist.

These are largely self-explanatory. 'Long' (as in 'long *rare* or *obs.*') implies for several centuries, usually from before the eighteenth.

Certain labels can also be used to link or clarify the relationship between (parts of) definitions, e.g. *esp.*, *spec.*, *fig.*, *gen.*, *transf.* The abbreviations used in these labels also appear in other contexts. (The specification *esp.* is in italics if it introduces a complete definition, but in romans if introducing a parenthetical part of a larger definition.)

4.5.2. Status symbols.

Two symbols are used to express status: a dagger (†) and an asterisk (*).

The dagger indicates that a word, sense, form, or construction is obsolete. It is placed before the relevant word(s) or relevant sense number.

The asterisk indicates that a spelling or form is now used primarily in the United States, and elsewhere where US spelling conventions are followed. The asterisk does not exclude the possibility that the form was standard or common in British use in the past. It is placed before the form it qualifies.

E.g. (s.v. **favourite**) Also ***favorite**.

Very occasionally an American pronunciation is given, in which case an asterisk is similarly used.

4.6 Variant spellings

If a headword has a significant alternative spelling, this is given before the date (and inflection if appropriate) at the top of the entry. Variants are generally preceded by 'Also', or sometimes 'Orig.', and are often further qualified in some respect.

E.g. **defence** ... *v.t.* Also **defense**.
locale ... *n.* Also **local**.
jaunty ... *a.* Also (earlier)

┌ **janty**.

disc ... *n.* Also (*US & Computing* now the usual form) **disk**.

set ... *n.*

† Also (now chiefly in senses 16, 23, 24, 32, 33) **sett**.

Frequently the difference from the headword is highlighted by abbreviating the variant to the significant part, the missing part(s) being indicated by a hyphen.

E.g. **emigre** ... *n.* Also **é-**.
dislikeable ... *a.* Also **-likable**.
Amerikan ... *a.* Also **-kkk-**.

Complete variants appear in the index for Other forms of words, incomplete forms do not, but can be found through a Full-text search.

If a variant form is current and has a different pronunciation from the headword, this is given.

E.g. **McCoy** /m@kɔ / *n.* ... Also **Mackay** /

m@kV /.

Variants differing only in initial capitalization are not usually given except for proprietary terms, for nouns from modern German, and for words passing into names or titles. If the capitalization difference applies only to certain senses, it can be specified under those senses.

E.g. **La** /la / *a.* (*def. article*). Also **la**.
(s.v. **beauty** *n.* 1) **b** (**B-**) This quality personified.

Many compounds can be (or, in the past, have been) written in several different ways: as two or more words, hyphenated, or (increasingly) as one solid word. In most cases one form (the usual modern form) is given, but this does not mean that the others are unacceptable or even, in some cases, uncommon.

This dictionary follows the tradition of Oxford University Press in using *-ize* (and corresponding *-ization*, *-izer*, etc.) rather than *-ise* for verbs (and corresponding nouns etc.) derived from Greek *-izein* or Latin *-izare*, and for words modelled on these forms. The *-s-* variants are specified for headwords and are to be assumed for derivatives.

Variants with the ligatures *ae* and *oe* are to be assumed for words (usually of classical origin) written in this dictionary with *ae* and *oe*.

Not all possible variants (current or obsolete) of a headword are listed, but only those of particular significance. Among these are variants which are used in the works of a major author (such as Shakespeare), variants which are important for the development or current spelling of the headword or for the etymology of another word, obsolete variants which were widely current up to the modern period, and current variants which are usual in the United States.

A variant entry in the main alphabetical sequence cross-refers the user to the full entry for the word except where the two would be immediately adjacent (see further under [8 Variant entries](#)).

4.7 Inflections

Three kinds of inflected forms may be specified:

1. Plurals of nouns (and very occasionally of French adjectives).
2. forms of verbs (according to person, tense, aspect, etc.).
3. comparatives and superlatives of adjectives.

Inflections are specified only if they are unpredictable or irregular in some way, or if there are several alternative inflections for one headword.

Complete inflectional forms are listed in the index for Other forms of words; partial inflections can be found through a Full-text search.

4.7.1 Nouns

No plural form is given for nouns which simply add *-s* or (in the case of those ending in *-s*, *-x*, *-z*, *-sh*, or soft *-ch*, or in *-j*) *-es*, including those in which final *-y* inflects as *-ies*. Other plural forms are specified, and they include those for:

- nouns ending in *-o* (as the plural may vary between *-os* and *-oes*);
- nouns ending in Latinate forms such as *-a* and *-um*;
- nouns with more than one plural form;
- nouns whose plural involves a change in the stem (as **foot**, **feet**);
- nouns whose plural and singular are the same (as **sheep**; in such cases the formula used is 'Pl. same').

'Pl. pronounced same' with no specified form implies a regular inflection.

4.7.2 Verbs

Inflections which are regarded as regular and are not specified are (i) third person singular forms adding *-s* or *-es* (when the stem ends in *-s*, *-x*, *-z*, *-sh*, or soft *-ch*), including most of those in which *-y* inflects as *-ies*; (ii) past tenses and past participles adding *-ed* and, where appropriate, dropping a final silent *-e*, (as **changed**, **walked**); (iii) present participles adding *-ing* and, again where appropriate, dropping a final silent *-e* (as **changing**, **walking**); (iv) regular archaic *-est* and *-eth* in older verbs. Other inflections are specified, and they include:

- inflections where a final consonant is doubled (as **bat**, **batted**, **batting**; in such cases the formula used is 'Infl. **-tt-**');
- inflections for the past tense and past participle which involve a change in the stem (as **drink**, **drank**, **drunk** and **go**, **went**, **gone**).

4.7.3 Adjectives

Adjectives which add *-er* and *-est* to form the comparative and superlative, including those which drop a final silent *-e* (e.g. **braver**, **bravest**), or replace a final *-y* by *-i-* (e.g. **happier**, **happiest**), are regarded as regular and their inflections are not specified. Single-syllable adjectives which double a final consonant (as **hot**, **hotter**, **hottest**) do have their inflections specified (the formula used is 'Compar. & superl. **-tt-**'), as do adjectives with irregular inflections (as **good**, **better**, **best**).

4.7.4

Inflected forms are usually given at the top of the entry before the date. Frequently only the part of a form which differs from the headword is specified. Pronunciations are not given for the most regular forms. The pronunciations of *-ed*, *-s*, and *-es* vary according to the preceding letter(s) or sound(s): for fuller details see the entries for *-ed suff.* ¹, *-s suff.*

¹, and *-s suff.*

²

E.g. **hoof** /huːf/ *n.* Pl. **hoofs, hooves** /

huːvz/.

canephora /

kænɪf(ə)rə -ˈniː-/ *n.* Pl. **-rae** /

-riː/.

fly /

flaɪ/ *v.* Pa. t. **flew** /

fluː/; pa. pple **flown** /

flaʊn/.

learn /

lɜːn/ *v.* Pa. t. & pple **learned** /

lɜːnd/, **learnt** /

lɜːnt/.

learned ... *a.* Compar. (*arch.*) **learneder**; superl. (*arch.*) **learnedest**.

4.7.5

Inflectional information usually follows any variant forms, except where it does not apply to the variant(s).

E.g. **defer** /dɪˈfɛə/v.

¹ Infl. **-rr-**. Also

┌ **differ**.

If an entry has several parts of speech and an inflection applies to only one of them, the inflection is usually specified at the beginning of the section for that part of speech.

E.g. **lasso** ... *n.* & *v.* ... A *n.* Pl. **-o(e)s**.

4.8 Dates

Provision of information about the age of all words included, and of their principal senses, is one of the distinctive features of this dictionary. The date of first (and, if relevant, last) recorded uses is given in terms of date ranges: after the Middle English period (and the introduction of printing) according to a tripartite division of centuries into early, middle, and late; in earlier times, where dating depends on less secure manuscript sources, according to broader divisions. The date ranges are defined and abbreviated as follows.

OE	Old English	-1149
LOE	late Old English	1000-1149
ME	Middle English	1150-1349 or, in some contexts, 1469
LME	late Middle English	1350-1469
L15	late fifteenth century	1470-1499
E16	early sixteenth century	1500-1529
M16	mid sixteenth century	1530-1569
L16		1570-1599
E17		1600-1629
M17		1630-1669
L17		1670-1699
E18		1700-1729
M18		1730-1769
L18		1770-1799
E19		1800-1829
M19		1830-1869
L19		1870-1899
E20		1900-1929
M20		1930-1969
L20		1970-

Every standard entry bears at least one date, indicating the earliest recorded use of the word. Combining entries are also sometimes individually dated for the combining form.

The word's earliest recorded date is given at the top of the entry, immediately before the etymology. Exceptions to this are Old English words which are presumed to be older than the written record (for example because of the existence of parallel words in other Germanic languages) or for which the exact Old English form is considered to be significant. In these cases OE (or Late OE) and a specified form begin the etymology, and the date is not repeated immediately before the opening etymological bracket.

Old English words and senses are usually only specified as 'late' if use earlier in the period (for which written records are scarce) seems unlikely. For the purposes of the Date filter, late Old English is combined with simple Old English to give a single set of OE dates.

Every main numbered or lettered sense in the first section of an entry (usually treating the headword alone) also bears a date, at the end of the definition and after any labels.

4.8.1 Obsolete words and senses

If a word or sense is obsolete, the date of its last recorded use is given, linked to the opening date by a dash (e.g. LME-E18). If an obsolete headword has only one sense, or if all senses have exactly the same

period of currency, a final date is given with the opening date at the top of the entry. In other cases final dates are given after the opening dates at the end of each obsolete sense.

Currency for only one date range, or for one main period or century, is indicated by 'Only in'. For example, 'Only in L16', 'Only in ME' (either only between 1150 and 1349 or only in the Middle English period as a whole, 1150 to 1469), 'Only in 17' (in all three parts of the 17th century only). If a word or sense is current for two consecutive date ranges in the same century, the century is given only in the closing date, e.g. E-M17; M-L18.

4.8.2 Dates for derivatives

Derivatives at the end of a standard entry and in most combining entries are also dated. Each bears a single date of first (or, if obsolete, first and last) use at the end of its entry. The dates of individual senses or parts of speech are not distinguished.

4.9 Etymology

All entries which are not simply variant entries contain etymological information, explaining the origin and formation of the headword. In standard entries and some combining entries, this information is generally placed in square brackets after the first date. In some combining entries and all letter entries the etymological information is not formally distinguished, but forms part of a general description of the head form.

Within an entry a particular sense or subentry may also have its own additional etymology.

Etymologies in square brackets frequently contain a great deal of information, usually in a highly abbreviated form. Recourse to the [abbreviations list](#) will often clarify an etymology, but various conventions of presentation are used. This section aims to explain only those most likely to require clarification.

4.9.1 Basic etymological forms and facts

If a word is formed from one or more other words (as by contraction or combination, or by the addition of a prefix or suffix) the etymology gives the words from which it is formed and often explains the nature of the formation.

E.g. **Amerindian** ... *n.* ... [Contr. of *American Indian*.]
fatuous ... *a.* ... [f. *L fatuus* **FOOLISH** ... + **-OUS**.]
initial ... *v.* ... [f. the *n.*]
jama ... *n.* ² ... [Abbrev.] **Pyjama**.
matchmake ... *v.i.* ... [Back-form. f. **MATCHMAKER** *n.*]
outswinger ... *n.* ... [f. **OUT-** + **SWINGER** *n.*]

¹]

If a word is an adoption from another language, the etymology opens with a specification of the language of origin and, if it differs from the English spelling of the headword, the form of the word in the foreign language.

E.g. **scandal** ... *n.* ... [(O)Fr. *scandale* ...]
bigot ... [Fr., of unkn. origin.]

'From' ('f.') is widely used to open etymologies where the headword is formed from several combined elements or from another headword. The formula 'f. as' (usually followed by a cross-reference) indicates that the headword is from the same principal or initial word as the other word mentioned.

E.g. **colotomy** ... [f. as **COLON** *n.* ¹ + **-TOMY**.] - the etymology of **colon** *n.*

¹ (L f. Gk *kolon*) is also valid for the *colo-* part of **colotomy**.

References to other headwords are in the usual cross-reference style of small capitals (see [section 5](#)), unless the headword is alphabetically adjacent to the entry in question, when it is often referred to as 'prec.' (for 'preceding entry') or 'next' (for 'next entry').

A half bracket can be used to exclude part of a word in an etymology that is not represented in the headword.

E.g. **polaron** ... [f. **POLAR(IZATION + -ON)**.]

Foreign forms from languages which do not use the Roman alphabet (as Greek, Russian, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Arabic, and Chinese) are transliterated. The transliteration system used for Chinese is Pinyin, although the Wade-Giles transliteration is also given if it sheds light on the English form. For transliteration tables for Greek and Russian, see [Transliteration of Greek](#) and [Transliteration of Russian](#).

4.9.2 References and cross-references in etymologies

Etymologies often contain cross-references to other entries, frequently at the end of the etymology, preceded by either 'see' or 'cf.'

E.g. **lecherous** ... [OFr. *lecheros*, f. *lecheor*: see **LECHER** *n.* ¹, **-OUS**.]
buffalo ... [Prob. immed. f. Port. *bufalo* . . . Cf. **BUFF** *n.*

², **BUFFLE**.]

If 'see' is used to refer to another entry, the etymology of the entry referred to directly extends or elaborates on the first etymology, and there is usually an identifiable point of contact, often a shared foreign form. For example in **lecherous** above there is a reference 'see **lecher** *n.* ¹', and under **lecher** *n.*¹ the etymology runs [OFr. *lichiere* (nom.), *lecheor*, *-ur* (accus.), f. *lechier* live in debauchery ...]. The point of contact is the form *lecheor* and the etymology of **lecher** *n.*

¹ contains more information about that form.

'Cf.' simply draws attention to some parallel or point of interest shared by etymologies.

A reference beginning 'See also' usually refers to a word derived from, or from the same source as, the headword.

4.10 Divisions in an entry

Every standard entry has a possible maximum of five hierarchical levels of formal sense division, though in practice two levels (those designated by distinctively coloured arabic numerals and unbracketed lower-case letters) are most frequent. The five levels are as follows:

A, B, etc. Capital letters are used in entries with more than one part of speech, each of which is treated separately. The section for each is designated by a capital letter. A statement of the part(s) of speech being treated in that section immediately follows the letter: **A** *n.*, **B** *attrib.* or as *adj.*

I, II, etc. Capital roman numerals are used to indicate major grammatical or semantic divisions of the same part of speech, especially in long or complex entries. The basis of the division may be specified after the roman numeral.

1, 2, etc. Arabic numerals divide different basic meanings of the same part of speech. These are the most common sense divisions.

a, b, etc. Within basic senses identified by arabic numerals, related subsenses are designated by unbracketed lower-case letters. The first division, **a**, may be unmarked if further subsenses are subdivisions of or subordinate to the first definition.

(a), (b), etc. Lower-case letters in brackets are used to designate minor divisions in a main sense and senses of phrases, derivatives, and other subentries.

The first, third, and fourth of these levels are individually dated, and the second is implicitly dated from the next following sense. Within each dated level senses and divisions are ordered chronologically. The dagger for obsolete uses is usually attached to the highest relevant sense level and not repeated for each of the ranks below.

4.11 Grammatical information

Many definitions (and other parts of entries) contain grammatical information about the word being defined. Much of this information is straightforward, and this section aims only to explain some features which may require further clarification.

4.11.1 Transitivity of verbs

All verbs have a specification of transitivity, according to the two main categories transitive and intransitive: *v.t.* and *v.i.* Fully established uses of fundamentally transitive verbs with an object understood are in this dictionary classed as intransitive.

If a verb has the same transitivity in all its senses, a single indication of transitivity is given. This will be at the top of the entry beside the part of speech if the headword is a verb only, or has no part-of-speech divisions, and after a coloured capital if the entry is divided into separate parts of speech. If transitivity varies among senses, it is shown after each relevant sense number or letter, before the definition. Possibilities are *v.t.*, *v.i.*, and, where the definition covers both transitive and intransitive uses, *v.t. & i.* or *v.i. & t.* (either the older or the more frequent being specified first).

Reflexive senses may be marked by *refl.*, alone if the verb is otherwise only transitive, as *v.refl.* if transitivity is mixed.

If a sense of a transitive verb occurs only in the passive, the definition is expressed in the passive form, preceded by 'in *pass.*'

If transitivity is the basis of major divisions within an entry, it is specified after each roman numeral, and not at the lower sense divisions.

4.11.2 Plurality of nouns

A use or sense of a noun may be specified as 'In *pl.*'. This means that the following definition relates to the plural form of the noun.

E.g. **acoustic** *n.*, sense 1 opens 'In *pl.*' and the definition which follows is of *acoustics*.
gubbin *n.*, sense 3 opens 'In *pl.* (treated as *sing.*)' and the definition which follows ('A fool') is of *gubbins*.

By contrast *pl.* alone implies no change of form (as in *people n.*, **2a** *pl.* The persons belonging to a particular place ..., where the use defined is of *people* not *peoples*).

4.11.3 Constructional information

Many definitions contain information about the constructions which the headword takes or the contexts in which it is habitually used. Most of this information is in the form of self-explanatory statements of fixed or typical phrases, but in entries for verbs and for limited-set grammatical words (such as determiners) details can be more complex. Often the focus is on what the headword is followed by: either a general category of grammatical construction, for example 'w. double object' (as *envied her her job*), 'Foll. by inf. without *to*' (as *shall go*), or a particular word (especially an adverb or preposition) specified in italics, as 'Foll. by *out*'. In these contexts *to do* stands for any infinitive, *doing* stands for any gerund, and *that* stands also for object clauses without explicit *that* ('I said I would' as well as 'I said that I would').

Constructional information can appear before or after a definition, or can form an integral part of it. If the constructional statement precedes the definition, the definition is of the whole construction. If it follows the definition, the definition is of the headword only.

E.g. (s.v. **lay** v. 1 **18**) **b Naut.** Foll. by *aboard*: run into or alongside (a ship), usu. for boarding.
- the definition is of *lay aboard* and in this use *lay* is always followed by *aboard*.

(s. v. **live** v.) **5** *v.i.* Continue in life ... Also foll. by *on*.
- the definition is of *live* but *live on* means the same and is also covered.

(s.v. **refer** v.) **2** Assign *to* a particular class ...
- when *refer* means 'assign' it is always followed by *to*.

(s.v. **enclose** v.) **3** Surround with or *with* a wall, fence, etc.
- *enclose* means 'surround with a wall etc.' and may or may not be followed by a specifying phrase beginning *with*.

Following elements which occur frequently (but not always) and which extend the meaning of the headword are shown in brackets or preceded by 'Also'.

E.g. (s.v. **prelude** v. **2b**) be introductory (*to*)
(s.v. **likeness**) **4** The quality or fact of being like ... (Foll. by *between, to, with*.)
(s.v. **racket** v.

²) **3** *v.i.* Make a racket, esp. by noisy movement. Also foll. by *about, along, around*.
Verbal transitivity can be qualified by constructional information.

E.g. (s.v. **hare** v.) **2** *v.i. & t. (w. it).* Run or move with great speed.
- the verb is used either intransitively, or transitively in the form *hare it*.

(s.v. **lick** v. **1**) **b** *v.t. & i. (w. of, on).* Lap with the tongue; drink, sip, (a liquid).
- *lick of* and *lick on* mean the same here as *lick* with a direct object.

4.12 Use of brackets

Brackets are used in many places and for many purposes, and this section does not cover all of these.

A specified direct object of a verb is bracketed.

E.g. (s.v. **limb** *v.t.*) **3 Remove branches from (a tree).**

Definitions in such a form may, when the usage of the verb permits, be designated both transitive and intransitive. In such cases the intransitive definition is to be understood by mentally removing the brackets from around the direct object.

The referent of an adjective or subject of a verb is bracketed when it applies to only part of a sense or to a subsense.

E.g. (s.v. **green** *a.*) **2 Covered with herbage or foliage; (of a tree) in leaf.**
(s.v. **go** *v.*) **(b) (of a firearm etc.) explode.**

(If the referent applies to a whole main sense it opens the definition and is followed by a colon.)

E.g. (s.v. **foul** *a.*) **4 Of speech etc.: indecent, obscene.)**

Brackets are frequently used in definitions to combine information and avoid repetition.

E.g. (s.v. **cheep** *n.*) **A shrill feeble sound (as) of a young bird.**
(s.v. **leave** *v.*) **1 v.t. a (Arrange to) transfer possession of at one's death ...**
(s.v. **colour** *n.*) **8 Mining. (A particle of) gold.**
(s.v. **beep** *v.t. & i.*) **(Cause to) emit a beep or beeps.**
(s.v. **Minnesotan** *n. & a.*) **(A native or inhabitant) of Minnesota ...**
(s.v. **lack** *v.*) **lackland a. & n. (designating) a person owning no land ...**
(s.v. **colour** *n.*) **colour-wash n. & v.t. (paint with) coloured distemper.**

In such cases, separate definitions are obtained by including and excluding the bracketed section.

A clarifying or reinforcing part of a definition, which may be useful but is not essential, may also be bracketed.

E.g. (s.v. **cylinder** *n.*) **2 A (solid or hollow) body ...**

4.13 Illustration blocks

Any main definition section in an entry may be followed by a paragraph containing illustrative quotations and phrases linked to individual senses. The quotations and phrases may optionally be displayed alongside the definitions with which they are associated.

4.13.1 Illustrative quotations

The purpose of the illustrative quotations is to complement the definitions by clarifying sense distinctions, illustrating constructions, and representing common collocations. Consequently, quotations are selective and many words and senses are not illustrated. The first quotation for any use is not the first known example.

All quotations in this dictionary are from published sources.

The first quotation included for any sense (when an entry has more than one sense) is preceded by the number (and letter) of that sense. If an entry has more than one quotation for a sense, these are arranged in basically chronological order. If a quotation illustrates a type of usage not explicitly covered by the definition, the quotation may be preceded by a qualification, such as *attrib.*, *fig.*.

The source of a quotation is given immediately before the quotation text. This is usually either an author (in small capitals) or a published newspaper, journal, etc. (in italics). No quotation from a periodical dates from before the nineteenth century, and the great majority are from the twentieth. With a few exceptions titles of individual works are given only for Shakespeare. Chapter and verse are given for books of the Bible.

E.g. (s.v. **cheer** *n.* 1) **6** *Times* The market took cheer..and marked the shares up 3p.
(s.v. **rain** *v.*) **3** **SHAKES.** *Twel. N.* The rain it raineth every day.
(s.v. **disciple** *n.*) **1** *AV John 20:20* Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

Quotations specified 'OED' reproduce examples included in the *Oxford English Dictionary* but attributed to no particular source and usually described as 'Modern'. They belong to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

Omissions from quotations are indicated by ellipses.

See also the [list of authors and publications quoted](#).

4.13.2 Other illustrative material

Illustration blocks can also contain defined phrases and cross-references to phrases defined elsewhere. Typical or common types of uses of a headword may be illustrated by italic examples rather than quotations from specified sources.

E.g. (s.v. **analysis**) **1** *in the final, last, ultimate, analysis* after all due consideration, in the end.
(s.v. **butcher** *n.*) **1** *FAMILY* *butcher*.
(s.v. **rhyme** *n.*) **3** *double rhyme, eye rhyme, imperfect rhyme, treble rhyme*, etc.

4.14 Phrases and compounds

Phrases and compounds (collectively referred to here as subentries) are usually included (either listed or defined) in blocks in the main entry for one of their significant words. The blocks in which they appear are located after a definition section and any illustration block. These blocks are of several kinds, and each has an italic heading, as

- Phrases:
- Comb.:
- Attrib. & comb.:
- Special collocations: (only of adjectives)
- With advs. (or preps.) in specialized senses: (only of verbs)

or some combination of these. Within such blocks subentries are in alphabetical order. Defined items are distinctively coloured, and there may also be cross-references to similar phrases containing the headword but defined under another entry (see [section 5](#)). Subentries in these blocks are not dated. Separate senses or parts of speech of a subentry can be divided by a bracketed lower-case letter: **(a)**, **(b)**, etc. Any status labels and symbols at the top of an entry apply also to the subentries in these blocks.

4.14.1 Phrases

Phrases can appear in several places in an entry: in a block headed *Phrases:*, in an illustration block (see [4.13.2](#)), in a main definition, or (occasionally) in another subentry block as a phrase of a compound. The examples below illustrate the latter two of these:

- (s.v. **kibosh** *n.*) **1** *put the kibosh on*, put an end to, dispose of finally.
- (s.v. **leg** *n.*) **leg-of-mutton** *a.* resembling a leg of mutton, esp. in shape; *leg-of-mutton sail*, a triangular mainsail; *leg-of-mutton sleeve*, ...

Phrases are usually treated in the entry for their first significant word, but if a later word in the phrase has particular importance, the phrase can be treated under that word.

E.g. **ship of the line** is treated under **line** *n.* ², not under **ship** *n.*

4.14.2 Combinations

A combination is a compound (usually a two-word compound) the first element of which is the headword. A combination most often consists of two nouns, but may also be made up of a noun and some other part of speech (especially an adjective), a verb plus a noun object or adverb, or an adjective plus any part of speech other than a (separately written) noun (when the formation is classed as a special collocation: see 4.14.3). If a combination is a noun only, no part of speech is given. Otherwise a part of speech is specified.

If a noun is particularly frequently used attributively in a certain manner or sense, a combination paragraph may be headed *Attrib. & comb.*, and may open with a statement of the headword's attributive use(s) and some italic examples.

E.g. (s.v. **land** *n.* ¹) *Attrib. & comb.*: **In the senses..**'situated or taking place on land..', 'living on land..', as *land-battle*, *land-bird*... *land-journey*, *land-monster*..etc. *Special combs.*, as **land-agency** ...

If the first word of the definition of a combination would simply repeat the second word of the combination, a colon may be substituted.

E.g. (s.v. **cream** *n.* ²) **cream bun**, **cream cake**: filled with cream.

4.14.3 Special collocations

A special collocation is a compound (written as two words) consisting of an adjective (the headword) and a following noun used in a fixed way or in a way which is not simply determinable from the separate meanings of its two elements.

No part of speech is given; all special collocations are nouns.

4.14.4 Verbs with adverbs/prepositions in specialized senses

A verbal phrase consisting of a verb headword plus a preposition or adverb, whose meaning is not simply the sum of its parts, has a 'specialized sense', and such phrases may be treated (in verb entries) in a block headed

With advs. in specialized senses:
With preps. in specialized senses:
With advs. & preps. in. specialized senses:
etc.

Adverbs in such verbal constructions are sometimes referred to in grammatical literature as 'particles', and with transitive verbs can typically both precede and follow a direct object: *phone her up, phone up her father*.

A separate block like this is normally created only when the uses with adverbs or prepositions are numerous. Isolated or specific examples can be treated under numbered senses or in an illustration block.

E.g. (s.v. **light** v. 1) **4 v.t. & i. Naut.** Move or lift (a sail etc.) *along or over*.
11 v.i. Foll. by out: depart, get out.

Transitivity for items in these blocks is not usually specified unless a definition is ambiguous or transitivity varies among senses.

4.15 Notes

Information of relevance or interest, usually relating to a whole entry, which does not fit obviously into the normal entry structure appears in a note at the end of an entry (but before any derivative block). Such a note opens with a paragraph sign ¶.

Notes can be on a range of subjects, including dating, pronunciation, etymology, usage, and other relevant entries.

E.g. (s.v. **serendipity**) ¶ Rare bef. 20.
(s.v. **port** *n.*)

1)

¶ See also **CINQUE PORTS**.

(s.v. **lunch** *n.* & *v.*)

¶ As a synonym of **LUNCHEON** *n.* 2, *v.*, now the usual word exc. in specially formal use & in certain combs., though formerly objected to as vulgar.

4.16 Derivatives

A derivative is formed by adding a suffix (such as *-able*, *-ly*, *-ness*) to a word. Many such formations are treated as main entries, but many others, especially if they are fairly simple, with few senses and without further derivatives or compounds of their own, are placed in a derivative block at the end of an entry.

A derivative block always comes last in its entry. Derivatives themselves always have a part of speech and one date, but regular formations with readily deducible meanings (e.g. those with the adverbial suffix *-ly* or the noun suffix *-ness*) may be left undefined.

Derivatives appear in alphabetical order. Alphabetically adjacent items with the same part of speech, definition, and date may be combined.

E.g. (s.v. **New Jersey**) **New Jerseyan**, **New Jerseyite** *ns.* a native or inhabitant of New Jersey M20.

If a derivative is divided into formal senses or parts of speech, or if it has a compound definition (i.e. its definition contains a semicolon), its date is separated from its definition(s) by a colon.

A variant of a derivative may be given after the main form, often abbreviated to its differing element.

E.g. (s.v. **contest** *v.*) **contester**, **-or** *n.* a person who contests L19.

As long as historically appropriate, any variant spellings specified for the headword occur also in its derivatives. Status and subject labels given at the top of an entry and applying to all its senses are assumed also to apply to any derivatives.

A derivative preceded by 'Also' is a synonym of the headword.

E.g. (s.v. **convalescence**) **Also convalescency** *n.* (*rare*) M17.

Minor words which are not formal derivatives of the headword but which are etymologically related to it may also be included in the derivative block.

Derivatives are cross-referred to in small capitals (the same style as for headwords).

For pronunciation of derivatives see [section 4.2.6](#).

4.17 A sample entry

Click on the different parts of the entry for more information.

halfpenny /ˈheɪpni/ *n. & a.* Also ha'penny. Pl. halfpennies /ˈheɪpniːz/.

ME. [*f.* HALF- + PENNY.]

A *n.* **1** *Hist.* A coin worth half a penny; *loosely* a very small amount of money. ME.

b A stamp costing a halfpenny. L19.

†**2** A small fragment or piece. *rare* (Shakes.). Only in L16.

3 A form of earmark on cattle and horses. US. M17.

1 *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* Any judge..would have..awarded these sharks a halfpenny as their share of the compensation.

three halfpence a penny and a halfpenny.

twopenny-halfpenny: see TWOPENNY *a.* 1.

5 Cross-references

A standard style is used in this dictionary to refer from one dictionary entry to another. For main entries and derivatives (including words defined within combining entries) the word being referred to is represented in small capitals. The part(s) of speech may follow in italics (with any homonym number), and a particular branch or sense number may be specified.

E.g. **À LA CARTE**
FREE *a.*
ORTHOPTER **1**
POST *n.* ²

Phrases, combinations, and special collocations which constitute cross-references are given in italic. Direction to the entry or subentry at which the definition appears is made explicitly by 'see' or implicitly (when the direction is to a unique head form and no individual sense number) by presenting the relevant headword or derivative in small roman capitals in context within the italic phrase.

E.g. *abjure the realm*: see **ABJURE** **3**.
FLANDERS poppy.

Explicit cross-references may be made from one subentry to another. The subentry to which direction is made appears in italics followed by 's.v.' (when reference is to another entry) or 'above' or 'below' (when reference is to another subentry or sense within the same entry).

E.g. *catch cold*: see **CATCH** *v.*
Cornish moneywort: see moneywort s.v. **MONEY** *n.*

A definition may consist of an equation of one word, sense, or phrase with another. An equals sign is followed by a small capital or italic cross-reference, as described above.

E.g. (s.v. **coon** *n.*) **1** = **RACCOON**.
(s.v. **fin** *n.* ¹) **fin-back** = *fin whale* below.
(s.v. **gun** *n.*) **6** = *electron gun* s.v. **ELECTRON** *n.*

²
(s.v. **line** *n.*
² **17**) **c** A particular policy..which a politician may maintain or expect others to follow; = *party line* s.v. **PARTY** *n.*

When a cross-reference constitutes the only definition, the item cross-referred to is the more common or important one in that sense.

A cross-reference simply to a headword or part of speech equates the item being defined with all senses of that referred to.

6 Combining entries

In combining entries the headword is an affix, either beginning or ending with a hyphen and generally used joined to another word. Combining entries treat affixes of three types: suffixes, prefixes, and combining forms.

The dividing line between prefixes and combining forms is not always clear cut, and for ordering and cross-reference purposes they are regarded as a single part of speech. In this dictionary combining forms generally represent either (i) modified forms of independent words in English or the source language, often in, or in imitation of, Latin and Greek forms and ending in *-i-* or *-o-* (e.g. **Anglo-**, **auto-**) or (ii) identical and closely related independent English words combining more or less freely with others and in combination not always readily differentiable one from the other (e.g. **after-**, **back-**). All other initial word-forming elements are classed as prefixes (e.g. **ex-**, **non-**, **re-**).

7 Letter entries

Each of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet is treated in its own entry. These entries contain the majority of the abbreviations included in this dictionary.

The headword consists of an upper- and lower-case representation of the initial letter, separated by a comma.

E.g. **A, a**

The headword is followed by a pronunciation and a description and brief history of the letter.

This is typically followed by three branches: the first covering senses relating to the letter itself and to its shape or size; the second covering symbolical uses; the third containing a selection of abbreviations which begin with the letter. These abbreviations appear in alphabetical order. Each abbreviation is followed by an equals sign (any label applying to all the expansions appears in brackets before the equals sign). The expansions of each abbreviation follow the equals sign, also in alphabetical order.

E.g. (s.v. **V, v**) **VC** = Vice-Chairman; Vice-Chancellor; Vice-Consul; Victoria Cross; Viet Cong.

Some digraphs and ligatures, such as **ch**, **ph**, **ae** and **oe**, are also included as headwords.

8 Variant entries

Variant spellings or inflectional forms specified at the top of an entry will usually also be mentioned in their proper alphabetical sequence. Exceptions are those which would be alphabetically adjacent to the headword, noun plurals in *-os* or *-oes*, regular inflections specified because there is an (irregular) alternative, inflections deducible from statements of consonant doubling, and inflections stated to be the same as those of the root (as in the case of some minor or obsolete words, such as †**acknow** which is 'Infl. as know v.').

In a variant entry the headword is referred to the word under which it is mentioned (in small capitals) by means of the direction 'see' or by means of a statement of its relationship with the word referred to, as 'var. of', 'pa. t. & pple of'.

If a form is obsolete or foreign, this is reflected in the variant entry by a dagger or italicization as appropriate. Other qualifications are restricted to the main entry, which the user is directed to 'see'.

Headwords in variant entries may be combined if they are alphabetically adjacent and are for the same entry or for several correspondingly adjacent entries. If many related words share the same spelling variation, not all will necessarily be listed in the variant entry.

E.g. **honyock**, **honyocker** *ns.* vars. of **hunyak**.
labored *a.*, **laborer** *n.*, **laboring** *a.* see **laboured** *a.* etc.
serjeant, **serjeantcy**, *ns.*, etc., vars. of **sergeant** etc.

Variant entries which are homonyms follow all the main entries for that homonym.

Transliteration

[Transliteration of Greek](#)

[Transliteration of Russian](#)

Transliteration of Greek

a	α
b	β
d	δ
e	ε
e+◌	η
g	γ
h	' (rough breathing over a following vowel)
i	ι
k	κ
kh	χ
l	λ
m	μ
n	ν
o	ο
o	ω
p	π
ph	φ
ps	ψ
r	ρ
rh	ρ+'
s	σ, σ
t	τ
th	θ
u	υ
x	ξ
z	ζ

Transliteration of Russian

a	à
b	á
ch	+
d	ä
e	â
é	ý
ë	.
f	ô
g	ã
i	è
i+µ	é
k	ê
kh	õ
l	ë
m	i
n	i
o	i
p	ÿ
r	ò
s	ñ
sh	ø
shch	ù
t	ò
ts	ö
u	ó
v	â
y	û
ya	ÿ
yu	þ
z	ç
zh	æ
'	ü
“	ú

Note on proprietary status

This dictionary includes some words which have, or are asserted to have, proprietary status as trade marks. Their inclusion does not imply that they have acquired for legal purposes a non-proprietary or general significance or otherwise nor any other judgement concerning their legal status. In cases where the editorial staff have some evidence that a word has proprietary status this is indicated in the entry for that word but no judgement concerning the legal status of such words is made or implied thereby.

Headword

Etymology

Pronunciation

Parts of speech

Variant spelling

Inflectional form

Pronunciation of inflection

Date of first recorded use of word

Subsense division

Obsolete sense

Basic sense division

Sense number of quotations and phrases

Source of illustrative quotation

Cross-reference

Defined phrase

Status label

Part-of-speech division

Subject label

Currency of obsolete sense

Date of first use of sense

Date of first use of subsense

