

A Guide to Using and Understanding Dictionaries

PERMA-BOUND
THE STRONGEST BOOKS YOU CAN BUY

**LIVING
LITERATURE
SERIES**

Written By Mary Ellen Snodgrass

A Perma-Bound Production

Preface to Dictionary Study

Note: Some examples and answers may vary by dictionary.

Since the advent of the information explosion and the Internet, the ability to retrieve and apply data is crucial to problem solving, a major task in the twenty-first century. For the language student, no reference work contains so much needed information in so usable a form as the dictionary. It takes its name from the Latin for *dictio*, "the act of speaking." Through alphabetic entries, a single volume inventories a number of authoritative directives: words and phrases, standard and alternate spellings, pronunciation, variants, synonyms, inflected forms, abbreviations and definitions, guides to usage, quotations containing specific terms and peculiar usages, syllabification, parts of speech, cross references, maps and charts, schematic drawings, illustrations, and specialized appendices, for example, a list of colleges and universities, a geographical gazetteer, common abbreviations listed by profession or milieu, proofreader's correction symbols, and a biographical listing of famous people. Many individuals keep one of more dictionaries at arm's reach on desk or work station, where daily tasks require a precise, authoritative knowledge of words and how to spell, pronounce, and use them.

A Short History of the Dictionary

The pursuit of word information is at best an inexact science that depends upon widespread fact-finding methods, a knowledge of print, audio, and video media, and an open-minded awareness that words vary each time a writer, speaker, or thinker applies them to a particular lingual setting. For the past ten centuries, lexicographers have attempted to produce an accurate and up-to-date account of language by collecting and cataloguing information, then revising their findings at frequent intervals to reflect changes in usage and influxes of new speakers, some influencing language by blending it with one or more native tongues.

Other reasons for new editions include these:

- newly coined words and phrases (**condo, cell phone**)
- cross references (**erbium** See table at **element**)
- capitalization (**Kor · an** or **Qur · 'an**)
- alternate forms (**sewerage/sewage**)
- synonyms (**continue, maintain, endure, last, abide, persist**)
- obsolete spellings (**hautboys** for **oboe, ye olde** for **the old**)
- common phrases (**pro-choice, pro-life, D-Day, John Doe/Jane Doe**)
- acronyms (**ACTH** for **a(dreno)c(ortico)t(ropic) h(ormone), AIDS** for **acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, HIV-positive** for **human immunodeficiency virus positive, flak German** for **flyer defense cannons**)
- combining forms, as in prefixes (**psycho-** or **psych-** *pref* meaning mind) and suffixes (**-itis** > *suff.* Inflammation or disease of: *laryngitis.*)
- new uses for old words (**web, mouse pad, cookies**)
- variants (**gaol** *chiefly Brit.* Var. of jail)
- technological adaptations to spelling and usage (**fax, Google**).

Dictionaries have existed since early times, as evidenced by versions found in ancient China, Greece, and Mesopotamia. John of Garland, a thirteenth-century English lexicographer, was the first known wordsmith to label his work a *Dictionarius* (ca. 1225). A later innovation from the Middle Ages was a Latin dictionary that broke down difficult terms into easier ones or into dialects of Latin, which were the forerunners of the Romance languages—Catalan, French, Italian, Portuguese, Provençal, Romanian, and Spanish. In 1502, Italian lexicographer Ambrogio Calepino of Reggio produced a comprehensive work extending lists of Latin words with those of other languages. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were rich in dictionary writers, particularly, Robert Cawdrey, who alphabetized difficult terms in *The Table Alphabeticall of Hard Words* (1604); John Kersey, originator of the desk dic-

Guide to Using and Understanding a Dictionary

tionary; and Nathan Bailey, producer of a 60,000-word dictionary and the first to feature word history and to mark syllables and stresses in each entry. After years of research, in 1755, the field of lexicography resounded with names of neo-classic word-smiths like Joseph Addison, Alexander Pope, and Jonathan Swift. The giant of lexicographers, Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), published his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), a two-volume, 2,300-page work defining 50,000 words and featuring a remarkable prefatory essay on lexicography and quotations from master writers illustrating usage. His work eclipsed later efforts of the eighteenth century, such as William Kenrick's *Pronouncing Dictionary* (1773), Thomas Sheridan's attempt to standardize pronunciation (1780), and John Walker's *Critical and Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language* (1791).

In 1806, Noah Webster produced the first American language standard, which acknowledged spellings and meanings common to the United States. By 1828, Webster's first effort covered 70,000 entries, the most thorough word compendium in the Western Hemisphere. In 1893, the publication of the *Oxford English Dictionary* or OED made available a massive twelve-volume work detailing the history of English as far back as written language can be catalogued. The OED covers 414,000 words dated to separate meanings and list by the centuries in which they appeared. A shorter version, completed in 1932, defines 195,000 terms and is classified as a semi-unabridged dictionary, now available in regular print, fine print, CD, and on-line versions. Twenty-first century lexicographers have offered their own innovations, especially the inclusion of a dictionary, spell-check, and thesaurus in computer software and rapid translation of texts by search engines.

General Objectives

1. To encourage an appreciation for and interest in words
2. To assist students in the formation of good study habits
3. To stimulate a desire for correctness
4. To encourage self-motivation and home use of reference sources
5. To illustrate the differences in reference works
6. To teach a greater appreciation of parts of

7. To develop vocabulary through an understanding of root words, prefixes, and suffixes
8. To characterize the importance of proper nouns and adjectives to a thorough knowledge of language
9. To improve pronunciation skills
10. To correct faulty spelling habits, particularly plurals, hyphenated words, word compounds, inflected forms, principal parts, and homonyms
11. To demonstrate the importance of guide words
12. To stress the importance of matching a definition to context
13. To point out peculiarities of language, such as acronyms, slang, trademarks, neologisms, symbols, informal language, and obsolete words

Specific Objectives

1. To explain the use of diacritical markings in the pronunciation guide to each entry
2. To demonstrate the use of symbols, particularly the arrow [\leftarrow] and Roman and boldface accents [' and '] to indicate primary and secondary stress
3. To note the importance of examples, diagrams, schematic drawings, and charts
4. To encourage browsing under general headings to related terms
5. To foster understanding of abbreviations from varied disciplines
6. To note the layout of entries and the meaning of boldface and italics
7. To examine geographical and biographical entries for depth of information
8. To point out words and phrases with interesting derivation and to explain the linguistic changes in each in chronological order
9. To enumerate types of symbols used in business, math, computers, post office, hospitals, military, and warnings
10. To express the worth of currency charts to travel, banking, writing, merchandising, and other businesses and professions that rely on daily upgrades of money valuations

Across the Curriculum

Foreign Language

1. For the foreign language classes in your school, make separate lists of foreign terms from the dictionary. Give both the literal translation and the current meaning of each, for example, *sayonara* (Japanese, goodbye), *n'im-porte* (French, it doesn't matter), *eureka* (Greek, I found it), and *nolo contendere* (Latin, I do not wish to contest), a plea made by the defendant in a criminal action that is equivalent to an admission of guilt but allows the defendant to deny the charges in other proceedings. Supply terms from additional languages, for example *hogan* (Navajo), *oy* (Yiddish), *kim chee* (Korean), *atlatl* (Nahuatl), *aloha* (Hawaiian), *compadre* (Spanish), *paisano* (Italian), and *mazel tov* (Hebrew).

Computers

1. Using a writing program on the computer, rewrite a dictionary pronunciation key and substitute several models for each sound. Print out study charts of your finished list.

Education

1. For an English-as-a-second-language class, create a list of troublesome homonyms, such as *peak/peek/pique*, *vane/vein/vain*, *past/passed*, *principal/principle*, and *council/counsel*. Supply meanings for each along with model sentences to explain usage. Hold a homonym bee to test class members on their comprehension and spelling of each word.

Art

1. Make a wall chart of abbreviations that would be useful to a particular sphere of interest, such as the Post Office, government, the military, banking, science, mathematics, computers, highways, business, meteorology, hospitals, pharmacies, aviation, or publishing. Write out the meaning of each. Give examples of usage, for instance, *p. r. n.* (take as needed), *asap* (as soon as possible), *HRH* (his/her royal highness), *DOB* (date of birth), *OT* (overtime), *gtt.* (drops), *MPO* (military post office), *NPO* (nothing by mouth), *sst* (supersonic transport), *tdy* (temporary duty), and *TNT* (trinitrotoluene).

Advertising

1. Create an advertisement for your favorite dictionary. Compare one page with the same alphabetic segment of other dictionaries, including a children's or student version, an English-to-foreign language dictionary, picture dictionary, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a computer dictionary on CD or on-line, and an unabridged dictionary. List additional information, illustrations, and entries found in each.

Journalism and Editing

1. Locate photos, pictures, diagrams, maps, or charts to illustrate particular entries, such as the internal combustion engine, Indo-European language tree, photo of Walt Disney or Angkor Wat, types of lace, dissolution of the U. S. S. R. into sovereign states or of European currencies into the Euro, Zip Code map, parts of a grist mill, stages of an Apollo rocket, or development of the Roman Empire. Label the parts to correspond with the entry.

Library Skills

1. Select entries that raise questions, such as tofu, mikado, Suleiman I, MASH, Y2K bug, or rugby. Research these topics in other reference sources, such as an online encyclopedia, textbook, atlas, cookbook, historical handbook, Wikipedia, or phrase book. Footnote your information and provide a bibliography of works consulted.

Geography

1. Collect data on Central American countries and compile facts in one alphabetized chart. Include location, size, capital city, current leader, form of government, currency and currency symbol, and population for each.

Math and Economics

1. Footnote the currency chart with monetary units that have been replaced by the euro.
2. Make an alphabetized wall chart of the symbols and abbreviations for each currency, e. g., dollar/\$, yen/¥, cent/¢, dong/D, Norwegian krone/NKr, quetzal/Q, and pound/£.

Guide to Using and Understanding a Dictionary

Speech

1. In an oral presentation, compare appendices and charts in dictionaries. Suggest additional useful charts and lists, such as a zodiac signs and symbols, list of world secular and religious holidays, a diagram of the planets, a human skeleton with bones and muscles labeled, names and shapes of major constellations, list of phyla and species of each, time zone map, a map of the world, and elements of combustion, diesel, and wankel engines.

Social Studies

1. Make a chart of world leaders for inclusion in the dictionary. Brainstorm the types of information to include, such as correct name for the post (king/queen, prime minister, president, ayatollah, pope, chief), current holder of office, starting date of service, term limits, and type of government, e. g., representative democracy, hereditary chieftaincy, or elected leader.

Science

- 1 Propose an appendix for the dictionary, such as a chronological list of outer space exploration or inventions or scientific discoveries from different eras, beginning with the wheel and including aspirin, X-ray, electric light, trans-Atlantic cable, radio, aerosol, stirrup, penicillin, synthetic fabrics, canned food, anesthesia, dynamo, spinning wheel, chimney, sewing machine, moldboard plow, longbow, supersonic transport, loom, radar, microwave oven, inoculation, plastic, and cybernetics.

Health

1. Create a diagram to explain inoculation. Use a recent discovery, such as anthrax, hepatitis, ovarian cancer, or flu vaccine, and demonstrate how it stimulates the formation of antibodies to protect tissues and organs from disease.

Language

1. Brainstorm a list of current terms from news media that are not included in all dictionaries, such as SARS, Quonset hut, televangelism, Al Qaeda, jet ski, surface-to-air missile, low rider, iPod, and humvee. Create entries for each, including pronunciation, part of speech, etymology, definitions, usage, diagram or photo, and inflected forms.

Composition

1. Compose a report on a current dictionary by contrasting it with earlier editions. Suggest ways that the new edition can improve reading comprehension, writing, thinking, speaking, and study skills.

Using the Dictionary

There are varied types and styles of dictionaries—some shortened, some illustrated, some in a foreign language, some for clerks or secretaries, and some with extra sections on specific elements of reading and writing, such as abbreviations, foreign phrases, math and music symbols, monetary tables, standard measurements and conversions, and famous people and places. However, all dictionaries have similar structure and A to Z layout, the standard method in English of organizing information.

If you identify and examine a dictionary's uniqueness, you will find the best way to locate the information you need.

1. ENTRIES

Every dictionary alphabetizes entries to make them easy to find and explore. At the top of each page appears a set of guide words—**oatmeal-object, fish-five, exhibit-expected**. These words indicate the part of the alphabetic arrangement covered on that page or pair of facing pages. Thus, you could find **slant** on the pages marked **skylark-sleep**, but you could not locate **vein** on the pages marked **version-vestibule**.

Ordinary words like the noun **heart** will appear along with other versions featuring "heart" as a root word, such as these:

- the verbs **hearten, heartened, heartens, and heartening**
- the adjectives **heartly, heartier, heartiest**
- the adverbs **heartily, heartlessly, and heartrendingly**
- the compound words **heartbroken, heartache, heartbreak, heartbeat, heartwood, heartthrob, heartsore, heartburn, heartfelt, heartland, heartless, and heartrending**
- the hyphenated words **heart-to-heart, heart-healthy, and heart-stopping**
- phrases like **heart-lung machine, heart disease, and heart attack**.

2. PRONUNCIATION

A major use of dictionaries is the clarification of phonetics—how words sound aloud when spoken.

- The original entry shows where the word breaks into syllables, for example **col • lie** and **de • fine**.
- The marking of stress is essential to the understanding of easily confused words like **en • ve' lop**, meaning "to enclose," and **en' ve • lope**, meaning "a wrapper."
- Longer words require a heavy stress (') and a light stress (ˈ), for example, **may' on • naise'** and **re • frig' e • ra' tor**.
- Some words require simplified spelling of the sounds they make, as with **kwik** (quick), **fon** (phone), **kord** (chord), **o' to** (auto), **jem** (gem), **ser' kus** (circus), **ryth** (writhe), and **rong** (wrong).
- Others offer multiple possibilities. For example, coupon can be pronounced **ku' pan** or **kyu' pan**. The mark after the first syllable indicates voice stress. The order in which the two versions appear notes which pronunciation is most common.

3. INFLECTED FORMS

The dictionary guides the reader in the use of words in sentences, which may require changes in spelling or form to express grammatical meaning.

- For many nouns, an **s** changes the singular to plural, as with **bay/bays**, **raincoat/raincoats**, **hotel/hotels**, **trio/trios**, **bullfrog/bullfrogs**, **antenna/antennas**, **valley/valleys**, and **cereal/cereals**.
- Others demand an **es** to indicate plurals, for example **ranch/ranches**, **box/boxes**, **minus/minuses**, **dish/dishes**, **latch/latches**, and **waltz/waltzes**.
- Some entries are marked *sing* (singular) or *plu* (plural) if they have only one form, for instance, **scissors**, **statistics**, **means**, **head-quarters**, **trousers**, **starfish**, **mumps**, **athlet-ics**, and **reindeer**.
- Some entries require alterations to the last syllable, for instance, **horsefly/horseflies**, **penny/pennies**, **county/counties**, and **sky/skies**.

Note that the text may abbreviate the changes to longer words as **inventory/-ies**,

victory/-ies, **divinity/-ies**, and **registry/-ies**.

- Some words require unique alterations, as with **foot/feet**, **calf/calves**, **child/children**, **bacterium/bacteria**, **spectrum/spectra**, **basis/bases**, **phenomenon/phenomena**, and **alumnus/alumni**.
- Entries for verbs present the varied spellings of inflected forms, for example, a regular verb: **trade** (present tense), **traded** (past tense), **traded** (past participle), and **trading** (present participle).
- Essential to standard speech and writing are the correct forms of irregular verbs, notably these:

draw/drew/drawn/drawing
give/gave/given/giving
arise/arose/risen/arising
see/saw/seen/seeing
wear/wore/worn/wearing.

These forms help create verb tenses, e. g. **has drawn**, **gives**, **did arise**, **was seen**, **had been wearing**.

Note that some irregular verbs offer alternate forms, for instance,

wake/woke or waked/woke/weaking
sew/sewed/sewed or sewn/sewing
get/got/got or gotten/getting.

- Entries for adjectives and adverbs supply the varied spellings of the comparative and superlative degrees, for example,
fast/faster/fastest
lovely/lovelier/-est
soon/sooner/soonest
bad/worse/worst
well/better/best
often/oftener/oftenest or **most often**
- Note that some irregular adjectives and adverbs offer alternate forms, for instance,
sly/slier or **slyer/sliest** or **slyest**.
old/older or **elder/oldest** or **eldest**
far/farther or **further/farthest** or **furthest**.

4. PARTS OF SPEECH

Dictionaries use standard abbreviations to identify how words appear in sentences. For example,

- When **stand** means "to rise on two feet," as in "stand by me," it appears alongside *v* or *vb*, a short spelling of "verb," an action word.
- When **stand** means "a post" like a newstand, it appears alongside *n*, which indicates "noun," the name of a thing.

Guide to Using and Understanding a Dictionary

- When **late** means “not on time,” like a late spring, it appears before *adj*, which means “adjective,” a modifier of a noun.
- When **lately** means “recently,” as in has been friendly lately, it appears next to *adv*, which means “adverb,” a modifier of a verb, adjective, or adverb.
- When **ouch** means “that hurt!,” it appears next to *interj*, the abbreviation for “interjection,” a word or expression of strong emotion, as in, “Ouch! I pinched my thumb on the copier lid.”
- Words like **we**, **someone**, **who**, and **himself** appear next to *pron*, which means “pronoun,” a word standing in the place of a noun, as in “The twins are two of my neighbors who like gardening.”
- Words like **behind**, **upon**, **by**, **at**, **against**, and **across** appear next to *prep*, which means “preposition,” a term stating a relationship between two words, as in “walked between us” and “the soldier in blue.”
- Words like **and**, **since**, **because**, **or**, **nor**, and **however** appear next to *conj*, which means “conjunction,” a word that connects words or terms. For example, “I left early because I was sleepy” and “Kim and her cousins canoed at the lake.”

5. ETYMOLOGY

The etymology or history of a word returns to the first time the term appeared in use in standard English. Much of the language history is abbreviated, for example, **ML** (Middle Latin), **HGer** (High German), or **OF** (Old Frisian).

- Some terms have changed little over time, as with **fork**:
[ME *forke*, fr. OE & AF; OE *forca* & AF *furke*, fr. L *furca*] (bef. 12c).
This lengthy word history works backwards in time from the Middle English *forke*, from Old English and Anglo-French; Old English *forca* and Anglo-French *furke*, to the original Latin *furca*. The final detail reveals that the word **fork** with its current spelling was in use before the 1100s.
- Early spellings appear in italics, as with **dollar** *daler*, **light** *leoght*, **outrage** *utrage*, **kiss** *cyssen*, **god** *got*, **oat** *ote*, **knot** *cnotta*, **crane** *crano*, and **wife** *wyf*.

- More varied histories reveal that **nymph** once meant “bride”
kiosk was Persian for “portico”
dolphin came from the Greek for “womb”
filter referred to “felt material”
gravy named “broth or stew”
roost came from “attic,” the place where birds roosted
marionette was a “puppet form of the Virgin Mary.”

Getting the Most from the Dictionary

Dictionaries offer ways to expand knowledge from simple words to concepts familiar to the eye and to written and spoken language:

- Compilations pull together words or terms concerning one large topic. A useful list is the international money chart, which names the monetary units by country along with their symbols and subdivisions, for example: The Chinese **yuan** is comprised of 100 **fen**. In Taiwan, the symbol for the Yuan is **NT\$**.
- Other examples apply to different disciplines: A mathematical list compiles formulas for the volume of geometric shapes—**cylinder**, **sphere**, **cube**, **pyramid**, and **cone**.
Proofreaders’ marks indicate ways to alter written text, for example, changing pounds in numbers (5 lbs.) to the whole words “five pounds”
Another grouping contrasts four types of roofs—**gambrel**, **mansard**, **hip**, and **lean-to**.
- Most dictionaries offer schematic drawings, for example,
the assembly and function of a **lever**
the use of **isobars** to show barometric patterns on a weather map
sections of a **cone**
a **DNA** spiral
architectural parts of a **castle**
parts of a **sailboat** or **fish**
layout of a **chessboard**
leaves, fruit, and seed pods of a **plant**.
- Some charts offer data in a particular order, as with these:
Roman numerals—I (1), **V** (5), **X** (10), **L** (50), **C** (100), **D** (500), **M** (1,000)

branches of the **Indo-European Language Tree**, including Indo-Iranian, Armenian, Greek,

Balto-Slavic, Albanian, Tocharian, Germanic, Italia, and Celtic, and the places where the languages were spoken

orders and parts of a **column**

times indicated by one to eight **ship's bells**, comprising a 24-hour span

the different ranks of **teeth**, from incisors and bicuspid in front to the molars in back

world alphabets, covering Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, Russian, and Sanskrit

the **Periodic Table**, which offers the symbols of chemical elements grouped by types

the **books of the Bible** divided into sublists of the Hebrew Bible, Christian Old Testament, Apocrypha, and Christian New Testament

the shapes of **musical notes**—whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, thirty-second, sixty-fourth

the letters, numbers, and punctuation marks used in **Morse Code** and **semaphore**

sizes and distances of the nine **planets** from largest (Saturn) to smallest (Pluto)

frequencies, from extremely low to extremely high frequency, abbreviated **ELF** and **EHF**.

- Additional charts expand on entries to name additional words sharing a prefix, such as these:

the many words beginning with **mis-** (badly or wrongly), as in misfeed, misshapen, and misalign

words beginning with **out-** (exceeding or surpassing), as in outjump, outthink, and outmaneuver.

- The back matter following the A-Z entries may include these:

biographical names—Mohandas Gandhi, Susan B. Anthony, Geronimo, Joan of Arc, Shaka, Catherine the Great

geographical names—Caucasus, Ypres, Nairobi, Hispania, Beirut, Barrier Reef, Attu

signs and symbols from the sciences, computers, mathematics, weather, language, business, and standard warnings— ¢ , £ , $\%$, ° , ¶ , ~ , Ç , C/O , ™ , @ , $\text{\{}$, ^a , ≠ , ÷ , > , ° , å .

foreign terms—à l'anglaise, floreat, pro re nata, wunderbar, qué pasa, sui generis, sayonara, salaam alaikum

Guide to Using and Understanding a Dictionary

Dictionary Comprehension Exercises

The following exercises serve as teaching tools to familiarize students with various aspects of dictionaries.

A. ALPHABETIC ORDER

For convenience, entries in the dictionary are alphabetized. Number the following examples in the correct order of appearance.

- ___ 1. **x¹** or **X** The 24th letter of the English alphabet.
- ___ 2. **xy • lem** The supporting and water-conducting tissue of vascular plants, consisting primarily of woody tissue.
- ___ 3. **xi** The 14th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- ___ 4. **x-ax • is** The horizontal axis of a two-dimensional Cartesian coordinate system.
- ___ 5. **x-ra • di • a • tion** Treatment with or exposure to x-rays.
- ___ 6. **xen • o • phobe** One unduly fearful or contemptuous of strangers or foreigners.
- ___ 7. **X • mas** Christmas.
- ___ 8. **xy • lo • phone** A percussion instrument consisting of a mounted row of wooden bars graduated in length to sound a chromatic scale, played with two small mallets.
- ___ 9. **Xe** The symbol for the element **xenon**.
- ___ 10. **Xu • zhou** A city of E China NNW of Nanjing.

B. GUIDE WORDS

At the top of each page are pairs of words, such as **such/sugar maple** which indicate the alphabetic extent of that page. To look up a word, follow the guide words to the section of the alphabet in which the entry you seek is located.

Circle the entry in each of the following examples that would not belong on the pages marked by these sets of guide words.

- 1. **opposite/oration**: ophthalmology, opus, opportunism, opprobrium
- 2. **Massif Central/mate**: marmoset, masterstroke, Mass, mass-produce
- 3. **cadaver/caiman**: calfskin, calculation, cake, cajole
- 4. **pejorative/penetrate**: pentagon, pelican, Penobscot, penitent
- 5. **subjective/subsequent**: subjunctive, submachine gun, subnormal, subserve

C. PARTS OF SPEECH

Each definition of a word is limited to a particular part of speech. For example, among the definitions after the word **parallel** are *adj* corresponding; *n* One that closely resembles; *v* To be similar or analogous to.

Place an appropriate abbreviation for one of the eight parts of speech before each of the following examples:

well

- ___ 1. skillfully
- ___ 2. to rise up
- ___ 3. a spring or fountain
- ___ 4. not ailing or infirm
- ___ 5. Used to express surprise.

down

- ___ 6. fine, soft, fluffy feathers
- ___ 7. low in spirits
- ___ 8. to swallow hastily
- ___ 9. a rolling, grassy expanse
- ___ 10. in a descending direction

Guide to Using and Understanding a Dictionary

D. PRONUNCIATION

Within parentheses immediately following each dictionary entry is an approximation of the phonetic sound of the word. Sometimes additional data includes variants or the pronunciation of the plural, if it is markedly different from the singular, as is the case with **crisis/crises**, **madame/mesdames**, and **matrix/matrices**. Note that each word is divided into syllables with raised dots; major stress is marked with a boldface accent mark. A light accent mark indicates minor stress as in the pronunciation of **au·to·ma·tion** (o' to . ma' shun').

Give the number of the major stress syllable in each of the following words:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| _____ 1. coloratura | _____ 6. genre |
| _____ 2. rollback | _____ 7. cirrocumulus |
| _____ 3. suborbital | _____ 8. etymology |
| _____ 4. thyself | _____ 9. quantum |
| _____ 5. electrocardiograph | _____ 10. onomatopoeia |

In the words listed directly above, locate examples of syllables containing the following sounds. Place the words in the blanks provided:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 11. zhan _____ | 16. sihr _____ |
| 12. pe _____ | 17. graf _____ |
| 13. kyoom _____ | 18. tow _____ |
| 14. kwon _____ | 19. trow _____ |
| 15. toor _____ | 20. mahl _____ |

E. PRONUNCIATION SYMBOLS

Consult a chart of symbols that indicate the way sounds are described to answer these questions.

- _____ 1. How is the sound of the first two letters of which indicated?
- _____ 2. What symbol indicates the sound in the German word ich?
- _____ 3. What word demonstrates the sound made by the letter o with a macron above it?
- _____ 4. What word illustrates the sound of th?
- _____ 5. Name the diacritical marking that is pronounced *uh*.

F. COMPOUNDS

Words that are made up of two shorter words may appear in one of three forms:

- hyphenated, as in **hand-me-down**, **hand-feed**, or **hand-in-hand**
- separate words, as in **hand to hand**, **hand in glove**, or **hand puppet**
- single words, as in **handclasp**, **handset**, or **handspring**.

Rewrite the following phonetic spelling as either single words, hyphenated words, or phrases made up of single words:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| _____ 1. (loud' mouth) | _____ 6. (kort' yard) |
| _____ 2. (sun' strok') | _____ 7. (bol' we'v l) |
| _____ 3. (bold' fas') | _____ 8. (nurv' rak'ing) |
| _____ 4. (fli' bi-nit') | _____ 9. (van-dik') |
| _____ 5. (kuv' r krop) | _____ 10. (ol sants' da) |

Guide to Using and Understanding a Dictionary

G. PRONUNCIATION AND MEANING

Often the pronunciation of a word changes according to its meaning. For example, **lead** (lehd') means to cover, line, or weight with lead; **lead** (leed') means to guide, conduct, escort, or direct.

Match the following pronunciations with their meanings.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| ___ 1. (pur' fekt) | A. respiration |
| ___ 2. (pur · fekt') | B. smoothness or shininess of surface |
| ___ 3. (pol' ish) | C. to coil or be coiled around an object |
| ___ 4. (po' lish) | D. to make perfect |
| ___ 5. (bo) | E. participle of read |
| ___ 6. (bou) | F. the Slavic language of the Poles |
| ___ 7. (reed) | G. to foretell or predict |
| ___ 8. (rehd) | H. to acquiesce |
| ___ 9. (wihnd) | I. a curve or arch |
| ___ 10. (wynd) | J. accurate, exact |

H. ABBREVIATIONS

Most abbreviations bear some resemblance to the original, as in **ave./avenue, blvd./boulevard,** and **st./street.** Some, however such as **cwt./hundredweight,** require more thought to comprehend, as with the use of the Roman numeral C to represent hundred.

Match the following abbreviations with their definitions.

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ___ 1. AB | A. one thousand |
| ___ 2. Q. E. D. | B. a measure of acidity or alkalinity |
| ___ 3. viz. | C. and others |
| ___ 4. LL. B. | D. in proportion to the value |
| ___ 5. pH | E. a blood type |
| ___ 6. q. v. | F. bachelor of laws |
| ___ 7. et al. | G. please reply |
| ___ 8. a. v. | H. namely |
| ___ 9. M | I. which see |
| ___ 10. R. S. V. P. | J. which was to be demonstrated |

Guide to Using and Understanding a Dictionary

I. PROPER NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

Unlike an encyclopedia, which is a more comprehensive source of information, the dictionary contains limited amounts of information on proper nouns or adjective, such as the acronym **NATO** (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), the abbreviation, **C of C** (Chamber of Commerce) and **EPA** (Environmental Protection Agency), or the terms **Greenwich time, Rom, Epicurean, Hausa, Ménière's disease, Presbyterian, and Mohegan.**

Match the following capitalized words with their definitions.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| A. Amerind | F. Shiva |
| B. Boer | G. Tory |
| C. Brahmin | H. Urdu |
| D. Chanukah | I. Ute |
| E. Jove | J. Yoruba |

- ___ 1. An eight-day festival commemorating the victory of the Maccabees over Antiochus Epiphanes
- ___ 2. The supreme god, brother and husband of Juno
- ___ 3. A principal Hindu god
- ___ 4. A Dutch colonist
- ___ 5. Native American
- ___ 6. An American who favored the British side during the American Revolution
- ___ 7. A member of a native American people of Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico
- ___ 8. An Indic language that is an official language of Pakistan
- ___ 9. A member of a cultural and social elite
- ___ 10. A member of a West African people living chiefly in southwestern Nigeria

J. SUFFIXES

The dictionary gives examples of base or root words plus common suffixes. For example, after the main entry **inactive** are listed **inactively**, *adv*, and **inactivity**, *n*.

[Note: In some cases, the root word may alter in spelling to accommodate the suffix, as in **perpetrate/perpetrating, perpetration, perpetrator.**]

List the suffixes which are commonly added to the following root words.

- 1. duct _____
- 2. excavate _____
- 3. program _____
- 4. like _____
- 5. block _____

List additional forms of the following verbs.

- 6. set _____
- 7. rub _____
- 8. bite _____
- 9. grow _____
- 10. hang _____

List additional forms of the following adjectives and adverbs.

- 11. good _____
- 12. well _____
- 13. bad _____
- 14. far _____
- 15. many _____

Guide to Using and Understanding a Dictionary

K. SPELLING

In matters of correctness, the dictionary is the best source of spelling information.

Look up the answer to each of the following questions.

- _____ 1. What is the American spelling of cheque?
- _____ 2. What is the plural of Mr.?
- _____ 3. What is the second preferred spelling of adviser?
- _____ 4. What is the plural of measles?
- _____ 5. What is the second preferred spelling of caravansary?
- _____ 6. What is the third preferred spelling of tepee?
- _____ 7. What is the abbreviation for Captain?
- _____ 8. Which of the homonyms, principal or principle, means foremost?
- _____ 9. Does occur double the final consonant when adding the suffixes -ed & -ing?
- _____ 10. What letter is left out of the contraction ne'er?

L. ETYMOLOGY

Some entries contain an etymology or word history, beginning with recent changes in the word and going back to its original meaning. For example, **caulk** [<ONFr. *cauquer*, to press], which means caulk came from the Old Norse French word *cauquer*, which originally meant “to press.”

Using dictionary etymologies, answer the following questions.

- _____ 1. What was the meaning of caveat in Latin?
- _____ 2. From what Latin word does savage derive?
- _____ 3. From what language does narcotic come?
- _____ 4. From what language does thug derive?
- _____ 5. What did hoi polloi mean in Greek?
- _____ 6. Give the literal Greek for Christ.
- _____ 7. From what two languages does spy originate?
- _____ 8. From what literary genre is narcissism derived?
- _____ 9. From what language did odd come originally?
- _____ 10. To what kind of gathering did anthology first refer?

M. CHARTS

Dictionaries offer a money or currency table listed alphabetically by basic unit. Refer to this list and supply answers for the following questions.

- _____ 1. What is Botswana's primary currency?
- _____ 2. What units of currency derived from corona or crown?
- _____ 3. How many countries use the dollar?
- _____ 4. Which currency honors the first European to see the Pacific Ocean?
- _____ 5. Which currency bears the name of an African-American holiday?
- _____ 6. What is the abbreviation for the Taka?
- _____ 7. What currency is divided into 100 Groszy?
- _____ 8. What monetary unit is currently in use in western Europe?
- _____ 9. How many khoums in an ouguiya?
- _____ 10. What is another name for the gulden or guilder?

Dictionary Comprehension Exercises
Answer Key

A. ALPHABETIC ORDER

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. 1 | 6. 4 |
| 2. 9 | 7. 6 |
| 3. 5 | 8. 10 |
| 4. 2 | 9. 3 |
| 5. 7 | 10. 8 |

B. GUIDE WORDS

- ophthalmology, opportunism
- marmoset, mass
- calfskin, calculation, cake, cajole
- pentagon, Penobscot, penitent
- subserve

C. PARTS OF SPEECH

- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| 1. adv. | 6. n. |
| 2. v. | 7. adj. |
| 3. n. | 8. v. |
| 4. adj. | 9. n. |
| 5. interj. | 10. prep. |

D. PRONUNCIATION

- | | | | |
|------|-------|------------------|------------------------|
| 1. 4 | 6. 1 | 11. genre | 16. cirrocumulus |
| 2. 1 | 7. 3 | 12. onomatopoeia | 17. electrocardiograph |
| 3. 2 | 8. 3 | 13. cirrocumulus | 18. onomatopoeia |
| 4. 2 | 9. 1 | 14. quantum | 19. electrocardiograph |
| 5. 4 | 10. 5 | 15. coloratura | 20. etymology |

E. PRONUNCIATION SYMBOLS (ANSWERS MAY VARY BY DICTIONARY)

- hw
- KH
- toe
- this
- schwa

F. COMPOUNDS

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. loudmouth | 6. courtyard |
| 2. sunstroke | 7. boll weevil |
| 3. boldface | 8. nerv-racking |
| 4. fly-by-night | 9. Vandyke |
| 5. cover crop | 10. All Saints' Day |

G. PRONUNCIATION AND MEANING

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. J | 6. H |
| 2. D | 7. G |
| 3. B | 8. E |
| 4. F | 9. A |
| 5. I | 10. C |

H. ABBREVIATIONS

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. I |
| 2. J | 7. C |
| 3. H | 8. D |
| 4. F | 9. A |
| 5. B | 10. G |

I. PROPER NOUNS

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. G |
| 2. E | 7. I |
| 3. F | 8. H |
| 4. B | 9. C |
| 5. A | 10. J |

J. SUFFIXES

- ile, -ility, -less
- ed, -ing, -tion, -tor
- ed, -ing, -atic, -er
- ed, -ing, -es, -er, -lihood, -ly-, -lier, -liest, -minded, -en, -ness, -wise
- er, -ish-, -ade, -aded, -ading, -ader, -buster, -busting, -head, -house
- set, setting
- rubbed, rubbing
- bit, bitten, biting
- grew, grown, growing
- hung, hanging, hanged
- better, best
- better, best
- worse, worst, badly
- farther/further, farthest/furthest
- more, most

K. SPELLING

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. check | 6. tipi |
| 2. Messrs. | 7. Capt. |
| 3. advisor | 8. principal |
| 4. measles | 9. yes |
| 5. caravanserai | 10. v |

L. ETYMOLOGY

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. let him beware | 6. anointed |
| 2. silvaticus | 7. Old French, Germanic |
| 3. Greek | 8. Greek mythology |
| 4. Sanskrit | 9. Old Norse |
| 5. the many | 10. flower |

M. CHARTS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| 1. pula | 6. Tk |
| 2. koruna, krona, krone, kroon | 7. Zloty |
| 3. 34 | 8. Euro |
| 4. Balboa | 9. 5 |
| 5. kwanza | 10. florin |

Guide to Using and Understanding a Dictionary

Usage Test A

Part I: True/False (30 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. The word pair has two plurals—pair and pairs.
- _____ 2. The words fall, spring, winter, and summer are written with capital letters when they name the seasons.
- _____ 3. Tear can be pronounced either (tar) or (tir), depending upon the meaning.
- _____ 4. Inelegant is accented on the second syllable.
- _____ 5. Milles is the abbreviation for the plural of Mademoiselle.
- _____ 6. The phrase a fortiori was originally Italian.
- _____ 7. Bier is not a homonym for beer.
- _____ 8. Use cannot as the negative form of can.
- _____ 9. The principal parts of swim are swim/swam/swam.
- _____ 10. Lovely retains its y when written in the comparative and superlative forms.
- _____ 11. Br. is the advertising abbreviation for bedroom.
- _____ 12. Past can serve as an adjective, preposition, adverb, or noun.
- _____ 13. A sitar is a stringed instrument from India.
- _____ 14. A millimeter is equal to 0.01 meters or 0.04 inch.
- _____ 15. The symbol < means combined with.

Part II: Fill-In (30 points)

Complete each of the following statements with a word or phrase. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

- 1. The feminine equivalent of _____ is tragedienne.
- 2. Another name for Baja California is _____.
- 3. The third definition of lordly is _____.
- 4. The primary accent in do-it-yourself is on the _____ syllable.
- 5. The noun that is formed from fad is _____.
- 6. The word _____ is pronounced (bar'ó or bor'ó).
- 7. The second plural of _____ is syllabi.
- 8. The French term à la carte means "With a _____ for each item on the menu."
- 9. Esthetic and _____ are variant spellings of the same word.
- 10. The s in Caesar is pronounced _____.
- 11. _____ can be pronounced either (le' zhur) or (lezh' ur).
- 12. Bas mitzvah is a variant of _____.
- 13. The letter left out of the contraction cat-o'-nine tails is _____.
- 14. A hyphenated compound containing the word cave is _____.
- 15. _____ has two plurals—larynges and larynxes.

Usage Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Short Answer (10 points)

Answer the following questions with a word or phrase from a dictionary.

- _____ 1. What word is pronounced (kwik · sot' ik)?
- _____ 2. What is a G. P.?
- _____ 3. What is the abbreviation for country and western?
- _____ 4. Is (an' te ar' kraft') hyphenated or unhyphenated?
- _____ 5. Is (for' arm') a verb or a noun?

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer with complete sentences.

1. Explain how a dictionary illustrates usage.
2. Discuss the ways that the letter o can be pronounced.
3. Compose a list of ways to improve spelling and composition by regular use of the dictionary.
4. Compose advice to an advertising agency that sells dictionaries.
5. Propose ways to make dictionaries easier to read, especially for elderly, semi-literate, or learning disabled users.

Guide to Using and Understanding a Dictionary

Usage Test B

Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Choose the appropriate answer to each of the following questions.

- _____ 1. Which is a participle of draw?
- A. draw
 - B. drawn
 - C. draw on
 - D. drawn on
 - E. drew
- _____ 2. What is the abbreviation for megabyte?
- A. M.B.
 - B. MB
 - C. Mb
 - D. m.b.
 - E. mb
- _____ 3. Which syllable of photoengraving receives the most stress?
- A. first
 - B. second
 - C. third
 - D. fourth
 - E. fifth
- _____ 4. What part of speech is shrew?
- A. n.
 - B. v.
 - C. adj.
 - D. OE
 - F. ON
- _____ 5. From what word is curtsy derived?
- A. curt
 - B. courtesy
 - C. curtsey
 - D. court
 - E. courtly
- _____ 6. What is oolite?
- A. grain
 - B. limestone
 - C. dolomite
 - D. stone
 - E. lithos
- _____ 7. Which is not a meaning for q?
- A. The 17th letter of the English alphabet
 - B. quart
 - C. also
 - D. quarto
 - E. question
- _____ 8. How many pounds are in a short ton?
- A. 907.18
 - B. 2,240,
 - C. 1,016.0
 - D. 2,000
 - E. 453.6
- _____ 9. Which is a device that pivots to indicate wind direction?
- A. vein
 - B. van
 - C. vane
 - D. vain
 - E. vine
- _____ 10. Which noun requires one or more capital letters:
- A. NEZ PERCE
 - B. NIACIN
 - C. NIHILISM
 - D. NEW MOON
 - E. NEURON
- _____ 11. How many syllables are in Appalachian?
- A. one
 - B. two
 - C. three
 - D. four
 - E. five
- _____ 12. Which suffix can be added to friction?
- A. -ous
 - B. -able
 - C. -less
 - D. -ic
 - E. -al
- _____ 13. Which is a compound of home?
- A. home run
 - B. homecoming
 - C. home base
 - D. homeopathy
 - E. homily
- _____ 14. What does the e stand for in laser?
- A. earth
 - B. entry
 - C. excursion
 - D. electric
 - E. emission of
- _____ 15. What is the phonetic spelling of the second syllable of exclusive?
- A. klu
 - B. sclu
 - C. skloo
 - D. klooo
 - E. scloo

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Provide a word or phrase in answer to the following questions.

- _____ 1. What is the name of paired words at the top of the dictionary page?
_____ 2. What is the meaning of Red?
_____ 3. What is the plural of falsetto?
_____ 4. Is (far' e · land') hyphenated, unhyphenated, or written as two words?
_____ 5. From what language does the phrase par excellence come?
_____ 6. What adjective is abbreviated IV?
_____ 7. What is the singular form of referenda?
_____ 8. What sound do wheat and nowhere have in common?
_____ 9. Into what body of water does the Colorado River flow?
_____ 10. What was the occupation of Margaret Sanger?

Part III: Matching (20 points)

Match the following definitions with the word defined.

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| ___ 1. resistance to motion, action, or change | A. impetus |
| ___ 2. silly or empty | B. impress |
| ___ 3. thriftless | C. impregnable |
| ___ 4. to confiscate property | D. improvident |
| ___ 5. unwise or injudicious | E. imprudent |
| ___ 6. exemption from punishment or penalty | F. impunity |
| ___ 7. innate | G. inane |
| ___ 8. to confine | H. inbred |
| ___ 9. unconquerable | I. incarcerate |
| ___ 10. stimulus | J. inertia |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer with complete sentences.

1. Describe how you would use a dictionary to determine the proper pronunciation of the word perfume?
2. Suggest ways that a person can form better habits of dictionary usage.
3. Give examples of a word that is the root for a hyphenated term, a compound word, and an inflected form. Explain how the dictionary lists each form and in what order.
4. Write separate pronunciations and definition for all compounds of surreal.
5. Propose an entry on Médicins sans Frontières, winners of the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize.

Answer Key

USAGE TEST A

Part I: True/False (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F | 11. F |
| 2. F | 7. F | 12. T |
| 3. T | 8. T | 13. T |
| 4. T | 9. F | 14. F |
| 5. T | 10. F | 15. F |

Part II: Fill-In (30 points)

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. tragedian | 9. aesthetic |
| 2. Lower California | 10. z |
| 3. arrogant; overbearing | 11. leisure |
| 4. fourth | 12. bat mitzvah |
| 5. faddist | 13. f |
| 6. borrow | 14. cave-in |
| 7. syllable | 15. larynx |
| 8. separate price | |

Part III: Short Answer (10 points)

1. quixotic
2. General Practitioner
3. C & W
4. unhyphenated
5. noun

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

USAGE TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points) (Answers may vary by dictionary.)

- | | | |
|------|-------|------------|
| 1. B | 6. A | 11. D or E |
| 2. B | 7. E | 12. E |
| 3. D | 8. D | 13. B |
| 4. A | 9. C | 14. E |
| 5. B | 10. A | 15. E |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

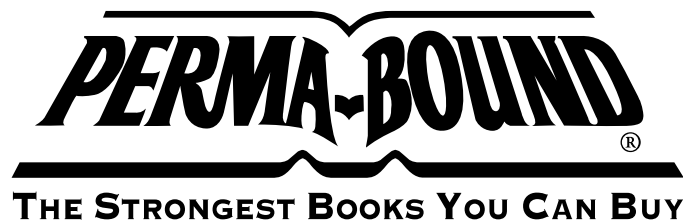
- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. guide words | 6. intravenous |
| 2. Communist | 7. referendum |
| 3. falsettos | 8. hw |
| 4. unhyphenated | 9. Gulf of Mexico |
| 5. French | 10. nurse/birth control
activist |

Part III: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. J | 6. F |
| 2. G | 7. H |
| 3. D | 8. I |
| 4. B | 9. C |
| 5. E | 10. A |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



Perma-Bound

617 East Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650
Toll Free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169
E-Mail: books@perma-bound.com

Perma-Bound Canada

Box 868, Station Main • Peterborough, Ontario K9J 7A2
Toll Free 1-800-461-1999 • Fax 1-888-250-3811
E-Mail: perma-bound.ca@sympatico.ca

Visit us online at www.perma-bound.com