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# Pocket Oxford English Dictionary

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TENTH EDITION

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**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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# Preface

This new edition of the *Pocket Oxford English Dictionary* is a revised, updated, and redesigned edition of the *Pocket Oxford English Dictionary* (9th edition). It provides up-to-date and accessible information on the core vocabulary of today's English in a single pocket-sized volume. It focuses on clear explanations of meaning and help with aspects of words which often cause difficulties, especially spelling, pronunciation, grammar, and usage. It will be particularly useful for secondary school students, and in the UK is ideal for students working for GCSE and Standard Grade level examinations.

Part of the range based on the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (11th edition), the *Pocket Oxford English Dictionary* is based on the evidence of how the language is actually used today, drawing on the analysis of hundreds of millions of words of real English contained in the Oxford English Corpus. Information in the dictionary is presented in a clear and concise way; definitions focus on the central meanings of words and are easier to understand than ever before, avoiding the use of difficult and technical terms. The new design and an open layout, with each new section of an entry (phrases, derivatives, usage notes, spelling notes, and etymologies) on a new line, ensures that finding individual sections and entries is easy to do.

In addition to giving clear information on the core language of current English, this new edition of the dictionary provides more help than ever before with tricky questions of grammar and usage (for example, on the difference between *pore* and *pour* and whether you should say *between you and me* or *between you and I*). The dictionary also includes a new feature: extra notes on words that people often find difficult to spell, such as *weird*, *skilful*, and *exaggerate*. Usage and spelling notes are based on evidence of real mistakes or problems that people have in their use of the language.

Pronunciations are given using a simple respelling system, making them very easy to understand: for the new edition, there is extra help with pronunciations of less straightforward or unfamiliar words, such as *anomalous*, *subtle*, and *unequivocal*. Etymologies (word origins) are written in a non-technical style to highlight the main words from which English words originate, with language names written out in full.

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# Guide to the use of the dictionary

## 1. STRUCTURE OF ENTRIES

The *Pocket Oxford English Dictionary* is designed to be as easy to use as possible. Here is an explanation of the main types of information that you will find in the dictionary.

Headword	<p><b>bathe</b> /bayth/ • v. (<b>bathes, bathing, bathed</b>) <b>1</b> wash by immersing the body in water. <b>2</b> Brit. take a swim. <b>3</b> soak or wipe gently with liquid to clean or soothe. • n.: Brit. a swim.</p> <p>– DERIVATIVES <b>bather</b> n.</p> <p>– ORIGIN Old English.</p>	Verb forms (inflections)
		Regional label (showing where word is used)
Sense number	<p><b>apogee</b> /ap-uh-jee/ • n. <b>1</b> the highest point; <i>his creative activity reached its apogee in 1910</i>; <b>2</b> the point in the orbit of the moon or a satellite at which it is furthest from the earth.</p> <p>– ORIGIN from Greek <i>apogaion diastēma</i>, 'distance away from earth'.</p>	• Introduces new part of speech or word class
Part of speech or word class	<p><b>buck</b><sup>1</sup> • n. <b>1</b> the male of some animals, e.g. deer and rabbits. <b>2</b> a vertical jump performed by a horse. <b>3</b> <small>old use:</small> a fashionable young man. • v. <b>1</b> (of a horse) perform a buck. <b>2</b> go against: <i>the shares bucked the market trend</i>. <b>3</b> (<b>buck up</b> or <b>buck someone up</b>) informal become or make someone more cheerful.</p> <p>– ORIGIN Old English.</p>	Usage label (showing how word is used)
Example of use (taken from real evidence)		Typical pattern (in bold)
Homonym number (shows different word with the same spelling)	<p><b>buck</b><sup>2</sup> • n. N. Amer. &amp; Austral./NZ informal a dollar.</p>	

- centralize** (or **centralise**)  
 • v. (**centralizes, centralizing, centralized**) bring under the control of a central authority.  
 – DERIVATIVES **centralism** n. **centralist** n. & adj. **centralization** n.
- Derivatives (in alphabetical order) → Alternative spelling of headword
- him** • pron. (third person sing.) used as the object of a verb or preposition to refer to a male person or animal previously mentioned.  
 – ORIGIN Old English.
- Grammatical information (in round brackets)
- die**<sup>2</sup> • n. **1** sing. of **dice**. **2** (pl. **dies**) a device for cutting or moulding metal or for stamping a design on to coins or medals.  
 – PHRASES **the die is cast** an event has happened that cannot be changed.  
 – ORIGIN Old French *de*.
- Cross reference to another word in the dictionary (in bold small capitals) → Plural form
- broccoli** /brok-kuh-li/ • n. a vegetable with heads of small green or purplish flower buds.  
 – ORIGIN Italian
- Phrases and expressions →
- Spelling note  Spell **broccoli** with a double c and one l
- Pronunciation (for selected words) →
- defuse** /dee-fyooz/ • v. (**defuses, defusing, defused**) **1** make a situation less tense or dangerous. **2** remove the fuse from an explosive device in order to prevent it from exploding.
- Usage note **USAGE:** Do not confuse **defuse** and **diffuse**. **Defuse** means 'make a situation less tense or dangerous', while **diffuse** means 'spread over a wide area' (*technologies diffuse rapidly*).
- grizzly** • n. (also **grizzly bear**) (pl. **grizzlies**) a large variety of American brown bear often having white-tipped fur.  
 – ORIGIN from **GRIZZLED**.
- Word origin (etymology) → **USAGE:** On the confusion of **grizzly** and **grisly**, see the note at **GRISLY**.

reaping machine that binds grain into sheaves. **3** a person who binds books.

– DERIVATIVES **bindery** *n.* (pl. **binderies**).

**binding** • *n.* **1** a strong covering holding the pages of a book together. **2** fabric in a strip, used for binding the edges of material. • *adj.* (of an agreement) putting someone under a legal obligation.

**bindweed** • *n.* a plant that twines itself round things.

**binge** *informal* • *n.* a short period of uncontrolled eating or drinking.

• *v.* (**binges**, **bingeing**, **binged**) do something, especially eat, uncontrollably.

– DERIVATIVES **binger** *n.*

**bingo** • *n.* a game in which players mark off randomly called numbers on cards, the winner being the first to mark off all their numbers. • *exclam.* a call by someone who wins a game of bingo.

**binnacle** • *n.* a casing to hold a ship's compass.

– ORIGIN Spanish *bitácula*, *bitácora* or Portuguese *bitacola*.

**binocular** /bi-nok-yuu-ler/ • *adj.* for or using both eyes. • *n.* (**binoculars**) an instrument with a separate lens for each eye, used for viewing distant objects.

– ORIGIN from Latin *bini* 'two together' + *oculus* 'eye'.

**binomial** /by-noh-mi-uhl/ • *n.* Math. an algebraic expression consisting of two terms linked by a plus or minus sign.

– ORIGIN from Latin *bi-* 'having two' + Greek *nomos* 'part'.

**bio-** • *comb. form* **1** relating to life or living beings: *biosynthesis*. **2** biological; relating to biology: *biohazard*.

– ORIGIN Greek *bios* 'human life'.

**biochemistry** • *n.* the branch of science concerned with the chemical processes which occur within living organisms.

– DERIVATIVES **biochemical** *adj.*

**biochemistry** *n.*

**biodegradable** • *adj.* capable of being decomposed by bacteria or other living organisms.

– DERIVATIVES **biodegradability** *n.*

**biodegrade** *v.*

**biodiversity** • *n.* the variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a habitat.

**bioengineering** • *n.* **1** genetic engineering. **2** the use of artificial tissues or organs in the body. **3** the use of organisms or biological processes in industry.

**biography** • *n.* (pl. **biographies**) an account of a person's life written by someone else.

– DERIVATIVES **biographer** *n.*

**biographical** *adj.*

**biohazard** • *n.* a risk to human health or the environment arising from biological research.

**biological** • *adj.* **1** relating to biology or living organisms. **2** (of a parent or child) related by blood. **3** (of warfare) using harmful microorganisms. **4** (of a detergent) containing enzymes.

– DERIVATIVES **biologically** *adv.*

**biological clock** • *n.* a natural mechanism that controls certain regularly recurring physical processes in an animal or plant.

**biology** • *n.* the scientific study of living organisms.

– DERIVATIVES **biologist** *n.*

**bionic** • *adj.* relating to the use of electronically powered artificial body parts.

**biopsy** /by-op-si/ • *n.* (pl. **biopsies**) an examination of tissue taken from the body, to discover the presence or cause of a disease.

– ORIGIN from Greek *bios* 'life' + *opsis* 'sight'.

**biorhythm** • *n.* a recurring cycle in the functioning of an animal or plant.

**biosphere** • *n.* the parts of the earth that are inhabited by living things.

**biosynthesis** • *n.* the production of complex molecules within living organisms or cells.

– DERIVATIVES **biosynthetic** *adj.*

**biotechnology** • *n.* the use of microorganisms in industry and medicine for the production of antibiotics, hormones, etc.

**bioterrorism** • *n.* the use of harmful biological or biochemical substances as weapons of terrorism.

– DERIVATIVES **bioterrorist** *n.*

**biotin** /by-uh-tin/ • *n.* a vitamin of the B complex, found in egg yolk, liver, and yeast.

– ORIGIN from Greek *bios* 'life'.

**bioweapon** • *n.* a harmful organism or biological substance used as a weapon of war.

**bipartisan** • *adj.* involving the cooperation of two political parties.

**bipartite** • *adj.* **1** involving two separate parties. **2** tech. consisting of two parts.

**biped** /by-ped/ • *n.* an animal that walks on two feet.

– DERIVATIVES **bipedal** /by-pee-d'l/ *adj.*

– ORIGIN from Latin *bi-* 'having two' + *pes* 'foot'.

**biplane** • *n.* an early type of aircraft with two pairs of wings, one above the other.

**bipolar** • *adj.* (especially of an electronic device) having two poles.

**birch** • *n.* **1** a slender tree with thin,

– ORIGIN Portuguese, 'new tendency'.

**boss-eyed** • adj. Brit. informal cross-eyed.

**bossy** • adj. (**bossier**, **bossiest**) informal fond of giving orders; domineering.

– DERIVATIVES **bossily** adv. **bossiness** n.

**bosun** /boh-s'n/ (also **bo'sun**) • n. var. of **BOATSWAIN**.

**botanical** • adj. relating to botany.

– DERIVATIVES **botanic** adj. **botanically** adv.

**botanical garden** (also **botanic garden**) • n. a place where plants are grown for scientific study and display to the public.

**botany** /bot-uh-ni/ • n. the scientific study of plants.

– DERIVATIVES **botanist** n.

– ORIGIN Greek *botanē* 'plant'.

**botch** informal • v. do badly or carelessly. • n. a badly performed action or task.

**both** • det., predet. & pron. two people or things, regarded together. • adv. applying equally to each of two alternatives.

– ORIGIN Old Norse.

**bother** • v. (**bothers**, **bothering**, **bothered**) **1** take the trouble: *the driver didn't bother to ask why*. **2** worry, disturb, or upset. **3** (**bother with/about**) be concerned about or interested in.

• n. **1** trouble and fuss. **2** (**a bother**) a cause of trouble or fuss. • exclam. Brit. used to express irritation.

– ORIGIN Anglo-Irish.

**bothersome** • adj. annoying; troublesome.

**Botswana** /bot-swah-nuhn/ • n. a person from Botswana, a country of southern Africa. • adj. relating to Botswana.

**bottle** • n. **1** a container with a narrow neck, used for storing liquids. **2** Brit. informal courage or confidence.

• v. (**bottles**, **bottling**, **bottled**) **1** put liquid in bottles. **2** (**bottle something up**) control and hide your feelings.

– PHRASES **hit the bottle** informal start to drink alcohol heavily.

– ORIGIN Latin *butticula* 'small cask'.

**bottle bank** • n. Brit. a place where used glass bottles may be left for recycling.

**bottle green** • adj. dark green.

**bottleneck** • n. a narrow section of road where traffic flow is restricted.

**bottom** • n. **1** the lowest or furthest point or part. **2** the lowest position in a competition or ranking: *life at the bottom of society*. **3** esp. Brit. a person's buttocks.

**4** (also **bottoms**) the lower half of a two-piece garment. • adj. in the lowest or furthest position. • v. (**bottom out**) (of a situation) reach the lowest point before stabilizing or improving.

– PHRASES **at bottom** basically. **bottoms**

**up!** informal said as a toast before drinking. **get to the bottom of** find an explanation for.

– DERIVATIVES **bottomless** adj.

**bottommost** adj.

– ORIGIN Old English.

**bottom drawer** • n. Brit. dated household linen stored by a woman in preparation for her marriage.

**bottom line** • n. informal **1** the final total of an account or balance sheet. **2** the basic and most important factor.

**botulism** /bot-yuu-li-z'm/ • n. food poisoning caused by a bacterium that grows on preserved foods that have not been properly sterilized.

– ORIGIN German *Botulismus* 'sausage poisoning'.

**bouclé** /boo-klay/ • n. yarn with a looped or curled strand.

– ORIGIN French, 'buckle', 'curled'.

**boudoir** /boo-dwar/ • n. a woman's bedroom or small private room.

– ORIGIN French, 'sinking place'.

**bouffant** /boo-oh/ • adj. (of hair) styled so as to stand out from the head in a rounded shape.

– ORIGIN French, 'swelling'.

**Bougainvillea** /boo-guhn-vil-li-uh/ (also **bougainvilleae**) • n. a tropical climbing plant with brightly coloured modified leaves (bracts) surrounding the flowers.

– ORIGIN named after the French explorer L. A. de *Bougainville*.

**bough** • n. a main branch of a tree.

– ORIGIN Old English, 'bough, shoulder'.

**bought** past and past part. of **buy**.

**USAGE:** Do not confuse **bought** and **brought**. **Bought** is the past tense and past participle of **buy** (*she bought a magazine*), whereas **brought** is the past tense and past participle of **bring** (*the article brought a massive response*).

**bouillon** /boo-yon/ • n. thin soup or stock.

– ORIGIN French.

**boulder** • n. a large rock.

– ORIGIN Scandinavian.

**boule** /bool/ (also **boules** /bool/) • n. a French game similar to bowls, played with metal balls.

– ORIGIN French, 'bowl'.

**boulevard** /boo-luh-vard/ • n. a wide street, typically one lined with trees.

– ORIGIN French, 'rampart'.

**bounce** • v. (**bounces**, **bouncing**,

**bounced**) **1** move quickly up or away from a surface after hitting it. **2** move or jump up and down repeatedly.

**3** (**bounce back**) recover well after a setback. **4** informal (of a cheque) be

**edging** • n. something forming an edge or border.

**edgy** • adj. (**edgier, edgiest**) tense, nervous, or irritable.

– DERIVATIVES **edgily** adv. **edginess** n.

**edible** • adj. fit to be eaten. • pl. n. (**edibles**) items of food.

– ORIGIN Latin *edibilis*.

**edict** /ee-dikt/ • n. an official order or proclamation.

– ORIGIN Latin *edictum*.

**edifice** /ed-i-fiss/ • n. formal a large and impressive building.

– ORIGIN Latin *aedificium*.

**edify** /ed-i-fy/ • v. (**edifies, edifying, edified**) teach someone something that is educational or morally improving.

– DERIVATIVES **edification** n.

– ORIGIN Latin *aedificare* 'build'.

**edit** • v. (**edits, editing, edited**) **1** prepare written material for publication by correcting, shortening, or improving it. **2** prepare material for a recording, film, or broadcast. **3** be editor of a newspaper or magazine. • n. a change made as a result of editing.

– DERIVATIVES **editable** adj.

– ORIGIN from **EDITOR**.

**edition** • n. **1** a particular form of a published written work. **2** the total number of copies of a book, newspaper, etc. issued at one time. **3** a particular instance of a regular television or radio programme.

– ORIGIN Latin.

**editor** • n. **1** a person who is in charge of a newspaper or magazine. **2** a person who prepares or selects written or recorded material for publication or broadcasting.

– DERIVATIVES **editorship** n.

– ORIGIN Latin.

**editorial** • adj. relating to the selection or preparation of material for publication. • n. a newspaper article giving an opinion on a topical issue.

– DERIVATIVES **editorialist** n. **editorially** adv.

**editorialize** (or **editorialise**)

• v. (**editorializes, editorializing, editorialized**) (of a newspaper or editor) express opinions rather than just report news.

**educate** /ed-yuu-kayt/ • v. (**educates, educating, educated**) **1** give intellectual or moral instruction to someone. **2** give someone information about a particular subject. **3** (as adj. **educated**) showing or having had a good education.

– DERIVATIVES **educative** adj. **educator** n.

– ORIGIN Latin *educare* 'lead out'.

**educated guess** • n. a guess based on knowledge and experience.

**education** • n. **1** the process of teaching or learning. **2** the theory and practice of teaching. **3** information about or training in a particular subject.

– DERIVATIVES **educational** adj.

**educationalist** n. **educationally** adv.

**educationist** n.

**Edwardian** /ed-wor-di-uhn/

• adj. relating to the reign of King Edward VII (1901–10).

**-ee** • suffix forming nouns: **1** referring to the person affected by the action of a verb: *employee*. **2** referring to a person described as or concerned with: *absentee*.

– ORIGIN Old French *-é*.

**EEC** • abbrev. European Economic Community.

**eel** • n. a snake-like fish with a very long thin body and small fins.

– ORIGIN Old English.

**e'er** /air/ • adv. literary = **EVE**?

**eerie** /eer-i/ • adj. (**eeries, eeriest**) strange and frightening.

– DERIVATIVES **eerily** adv. **eeriness** n.

– ORIGIN prob. from Old English, 'cowardly'

**efface** /i-fays/ • v. (**effaces, effacing, effaced**) **1** cause something to disappear. **2** (**efface yourself**) make yourself appear unimportant. **3** erase a mark from a surface.

– DERIVATIVES **effacement** n.

– ORIGIN French *effacer*.

**effect** • n. **1** a change which is a result of an action or other cause. **2** the state of being or becoming operative: *the ban took effect in 2004*. **3** the extent to which something succeeds: *wind power can be used to great effect*. **4** (**effects**) personal belongings. **5** (**effects**) the lighting, sound, or scenery used in a play or film. **6** Physics a physical phenomenon, named after its discoverer: *the Doppler effect*.

• v. bring about a result.

– PHRASES **in effect** in practice, even if not formally acknowledged.

– ORIGIN Latin *effectus*.

**USAGE:** Do not confuse **affect** and **effect**. **Affect** is a verb meaning 'make a difference to' (*the changes will affect everyone*). **Effect** is used both as a noun meaning 'a result' (*the substance has a painkilling effect*) and as a verb meaning 'bring about a result' (*she effected a cost-cutting exercise*).

**effective** • adj. **1** producing an intended result. **2** (of a law or policy) operative.

**3** existing in fact, though not formally acknowledged as such: *he is in effective control of the military*.

– DERIVATIVES **effectively** adv.

**effectiveness** n.

characteristics and feelings shared by all people.

**humanoid** /hyoo-muh-noyd/  
•adj. having an appearance or character like that of a human. •n. a humanoid being.

**human rights** •pl. n. basic rights to which every person is entitled, such as freedom.

**humble** •adj. (**humbler, humblest**)  
1 having or showing a modest or low opinion of your own importance. 2 of low rank. 3 not large or special: *humble brick bungalows*. •v. (**humbles, humbling, humbled**) make someone seem less dignified or important.

– PHRASES **eat humble pie** make a humble apology. [ORIGIN from former *umbles* meaning 'offal'.]

– DERIVATIVES **humbly** adv.  
– ORIGIN Latin *humilis* 'low, lowly'.

**humbug** •n. 1 false or misleading talk or behaviour. 2 a person who is not sincere or honest. 3 Brit. a boiled peppermint sweet.

**humdinger** /hum-ding-er/ •n. informal an outstanding person or thing.

**humdrum** •adj. lacking excitement or variety; dull.  
– ORIGIN prob. from **HUM**.

**humerus** /hyoo-muh-ruhss/ •n. (pl. *humeri* /hyoo-muh-ry/) the bone of the upper arm, between the shoulder and the elbow.

– DERIVATIVES **humeral** adj.  
– ORIGIN Latin, 'shoulder'.

**humid** /hyoo-mid/ •adj. (of the air or weather) damp and warm.  
– ORIGIN Latin *humidus*.

**humidify** •v. (**humidifies, humidifying, humidified**) increase the level of moisture in air.

– DERIVATIVES **humidification** n.  
**humidifier** n.

**humidity** •n. 1 the state of being humid. 2 the amount of moisture in the air.

**humiliate** •v. (**humiliates, humiliating, humiliated**) make someone feel ashamed or stupid in front of another.

– DERIVATIVES **humiliation** n.  
– ORIGIN Latin *humiliare* 'make humble'.

**humility** •n. the quality of being humble.

**hummingbird** •n. a small, chiefly tropical American bird able to hover by beating its wings very fast.

**hummock** •n. a small hill or mound.

**hummus** /huu-muhss/ (also **houmous**)  
•n. a thick Middle Eastern dip made from chickpeas puréed with olive oil and garlic.

– ORIGIN Arabic.

**humor** •n. US = **HUMOUR**.

**humorist** •n. a writer or speaker who is known for being amusing.

**humorous** •adj. 1 causing amusement. 2 showing a sense of humour.

– DERIVATIVES **humorously** adv.

**humorous** and **humorist** drop the *u* before the *r* of **humour**.

**humour** (US **humor**) •n. 1 the quality of being amusing. 2 a state of mind: *her good humour vanished*. 3 (also **cardinal humour**) each of four fluids of the body, formerly believed to determine a person's physical and mental qualities.

•v. agree with the wishes of someone so as to keep them happy.

– PHRASES **out of humour** in a bad mood.

– DERIVATIVES **humourless** adj.

– ORIGIN Latin *humor* 'moisture'.

**hump** •n. 1 a rounded raised mass of earth or land. 2 a rounded part projecting from the back of a camel or other animal or as an abnormality on a person's back. •v. 1 informal, esp. Brit. carry a heavy object with difficulty. 2 (as adj. **humped**) having a hump.

– PHRASES **get the hump** Brit. informal become annoyed or sulky.

– DERIVATIVES **humpy** adj.

– ORIGIN prob. from German *humpe*.

**humpback** •n. = **HUNCHBACK**.

– DERIVATIVES **humpbacked** adj.

**humpback bridge** •n. Brit. a small road bridge that slopes steeply on both sides.

**humus** /hyoo-muhss/ •n. a substance found in soil, formed from dead or dying leaves and other plant material.

– ORIGIN Latin, 'soil'.

**Hun** •n. 1 a member of a people from Asia who invaded Europe in the 4th–5th centuries. 2 informal, derog. a German (especially during the First and Second World Wars).

– ORIGIN Greek *Hounnoi*.

**hunch** •v. raise the shoulders and bend the top of the body forward. •n. a belief that something is true, based on a feeling rather than evidence.

**hunchback** •n. offends a person with a hump on their back.

**hundred** •cardinal number 1 ten more than ninety; 100. (Roman numeral: **c** or **C**) 2 (**hundreds**) informal a large number.

– PHRASES **a (or one) hundred per cent** completely.

– DERIVATIVES **hundredfold** adj. & adv.

**hundredth** ordinal number.

– ORIGIN Old English.

**hundreds and thousands** •pl. n. Brit. tiny coloured sugar strands used for decorating cakes and desserts.

**hundredweight** •n. (pl.