

Spoken English

A Guide on How to Use a Dictionary Effectively

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As a student who is learning English language, it is important that you understand how to use a dictionary. The English language has approximately 1 million words, of which an average speaker would be aware of about 60,000 words. You may be familiar with many words but would not know the exact meaning of them all. A dictionary is a handy tool that helps you improve your vocabulary day in and day out. Not only does it helps you deduce a word's meaning and spelling, but also helps you to effectively improve your English language.

Let us first look at the various information that you can find about a word in a dictionary.

- Spelling of the words and its plural form
- Syllables of a word
- Whether the word is capitalized or has an abbreviation
- The pronunciation of a word
- Different meanings a word has, its synonyms (same meaning) and antonyms (opposite meaning)
- History of the word
- An example of a sentence/expression showing the right usage of the word
- Prefixes and suffixes and their meanings
- Different words that can be derived from the main word

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Dictionary

dic·tion·ar·y

['dik SH ə,nerē]

(abbr.: dict.)

noun (pl. -ar·ies)

a book that lists the words of a language in alphabetical order and gives their meaning, or that gives the equivalent words in a different language.

• a reference book on any subject, the items of which are arranged in alphabetical order : *a dictionary of quotations.*

PHRASES

have swallowed a dictionary

informal (of a person) use long and obscure words when speaking.

ORIGIN

early 16th cent.: from medieval Latin *dictionary* (*manuale*) or *dictionary* (*liber*) 'manual or book of words,' from Latin *dictio* (see DICTION).

f referring to a dictionary. Most of us refrain to ig thing. However, if you know how to use a a word's meaning and refer the example. Let's

nary, make sure you buy a quality one like the

ctionary vary in approach. Therefore, the best

way to go about it is to read the intro section and jot down how the details are arranged. Once you know the proper alphabetical order, you are well on your way to use the dictionary real fast.

For instance, if you're searching for a word "gnome", goes to the 'G' section and check the guide words, which are located in the upper corner of every page. These guide words are an indication on how close you are to finding your word. These guide words are real speed busters and must be checked to locate your word faster. Then, look for the second word 'n' to narrow down your search.

Got the word: Now, that you have found your word, what should you pay attention to?

- Definition of the word
- Different pronunciations – pay attention to the stress mark - ' - usually placed before a syllable to help you pronounce the word correctly.
- Capitalization
- Synonyms and antonyms
- Use of preposition, 'in', 'on' etc.,
- Phrases/idioms linked to the word
- Spellings in American, British and Australian English.

[Improve your English speaking](#) fluency by reading the word aloud from the dictionary, following the pronunciation guideline.

Hope this guide helps you to make proper use of your dictionary. Upgrade your English speaking skills while you have fun using a dictionary.

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