THIS PROMOTIONAL BROCHURE CONTAINS SAMPLE PAGES FROM THE SECOND EDITION OF THE
MACMILLAN ENGLISH DICTIONARY:

- a full contents list
- pages from the letter E
- full pages of colour illustrations
- pages from the Improve your Writing Skills section
- pages from the Expand your Vocabulary section
- a Language Awareness article

with additional pages on the features of the dictionary.
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argyle

argyle /ˈɑːrgjɪl/ [noun] (C) a type of clothing such as socks or sweaters, consisting of different coloured diamond shapes

argue /əˈgjuː/ verb

1. [T] if people argue, they speak to each other in an angry way because they disagree = quarrel: Those girls are always arguing! = with: Don’t agree with me – you know I’m right. = about/over We used to argue over who to appoint as captain. = to discuss something with someone who has a different opinion from you. The programme gives people a chance to argue their ideas. = about/over They are still arguing about the details of the contract.

2. [I/T] to give reasons why something is right or true. Success is based on ability and hard work, not luck. = for/against You believe that something is right or true. Success is based on ability and hard work, not luck. = for/against You believe that something is right or true.

argus /ˈɑrɡəs/ [noun] noun (C) a large flightless bird with a long tail.

argument /əˈgjʊment/ [noun] noun

1. [C] an angry disagreement between people = quarrel: a heated argument (extremely angry disagreement) = without an argument They won’t accept higher prices without a good reason.

2. [I] if people argue, they speak to each other in an angry way because they disagree = quarrel: Those girls are always arguing! = with: Don’t agree with me – you know I’m right. = about/over We used to argue over who to appoint as captain. = to discuss something with someone who has a different opinion from you. The programme gives people a chance to argue their ideas. = about/over They are still arguing about the details of the contract.

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argy-bargy /ˈɑːrgɪˌbɑːrɡi/ [noun] (C) British informal noisy arguments

argументативный /ərˈgjʊmenˈtarsɪv/ adj showing disagreement someone who is argumentative often argues or disagrees with people

ardor /ˈɑːrdər/ [noun] noun

1. a very strong feeling of admiration or determination = love: He carried out the task with ardour. 2. very strong feelings of love = ardently

arduous /ɑrdjuəs/ adj extremely difficult and involving a lot of effort: an arduous task = The journey was long and arduous. — arduously

are1 (weak /ər/), strong /ər/! see be

area /ˈɛər/ [noun] noun (C) 1. a particular subject, type of activity etc: Mathematics is a subject which has links with all other curriculum areas. = What is your main area of concern? 2. a particular area of expertise is engineering. 3. a part of a city, town, country etc: Bus services in rural areas are not very good. = I was on a tour of Vancouver and the surrounding areas. = Of my family has lived in this area of England for years. 4. a part of a building, space etc used for a particular purpose: You can park in only designated areas (=places available for this purpose). = Visitors should use the reception area. 5. a place on the surface of something such as a part of your body: Be sure to apply sunblock to sensitive areas of your skin.

area code /ˈɛərə kɔːd/ [noun] noun (C) 1. a code for calling within a particular area of a country or region: Area codes consist of three digits. — in area code = in central London.

arena /ˈɛərən/ [noun] noun (C) 1. a large area that is surrounded by seats, used for sports or entertainment: a circus arena

argumentative /ərˈgjʊmenˈtərɪv/ adj showing disagreement someone who is argumentative often argues or disagrees with people

argyll /ˈɑːrgəl/ [noun] [plural] adjective use with argyll: Argillaceous: argyll rock: Argillaceous: argyll soil: Argillaceous: argyll clay:

argillaceous /ˌɑːrgələˈsiːəs/ adj made of argillae: argillaceous rock: argillaceous soil: argillaceous clay:

argillae /ˈɑːrgəli/ plural noun These are the usual spelling of the American spelling of ardour.

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reason /riˈzɔːn/ noun 1 (a) a fact, situation, or intention that explains why something happened, why someone did something, or why something is true: «for The police asked her the reason for her visit.» 2 reason for doing sth Could you explain your reasons for choosing this particular course? 3 why someone did something: «the reason why one lost the game is still not clear.»

rearward /rɪˈwɔːrd/ adj formal far from the front

rearview mirror noun a mirror fixed inside the front window of a car that lets the driver see what is happening behind it — picture

reason for doing sth 1 reason why 2 for reasons of economy/safety/security etc 3 for some reason 4 for some reason used for saying that you do not know why something happened, especially when you think there is no good reason for it: «for some reason, they wouldn’t let me help them.» 5 for some reason used for emphasizing that you do not think there is a good reason for doing something: «It’s fed to us before, so give me one good reason why we should believe him now.» 6 have your reasons informal to have a personal reason for doing something that you are not going to discuss with anyone: «I suppose she has her reasons for not joining in.» 7 no reason used when you do not want to tell someone why you have done something: «Why did you ask him for it?»

rearmament /riˈɔːrmənt/ noun 1 a rearrangement of something, which is not immediately obvious: «There was no obvious explanation for his sudden disappearance.»

reason why someone did something cause the reason that something happens or that you feel a particular emotion: «The probable cause of death was drowning.»

reason for doing sth 1 reason why 2 for reasons of economy/safety/security etc 3 for some reason 4 for some reason used for saying that you do not know why something happened, especially when you think there is no good reason for it: «for some reason, they wouldn’t let me help them.»

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I'm easy spoken used for saying that you will accept any choice or decision that someone else makes: ‘Shall we eat at home or go out?’ ‘Whatever you like. I'm easy.'

it is all too easy (for sb) to do sth used for saying that it is very easy to make a mistake or to do something that will cause problems: ‘For most people it is all too easy to put on weight.’ It is all too easy for someone in authority to think that they are better than everyone else.

It is easy (for sb) to do sth used for saying that someone thinks a situation is simple when it is really quite complicated or difficult: ‘It's easy for people in cities to think that small towns have no crime.’ It is easy to forget that many problems remain to be solved.

on easy street informal/rich that's easy for you to say spoken used for telling someone that although something may be easy or simple for them, it is not easy or simple for you.

within easy walking/driving distance close enough to walk/drive to in a short time: Parking is available within easy walking distance of the museum.

—easiness noun [u]

→ FREE1, OPTION

easy2 /ˈezi/ adj 1

PHRASES

breathe/rest easy to relax and stop feeling worried: Just three more questions and then you can breathe easy. I won't rest easy until I get my passport back.

sth comes easy (to sb) used for saying that it is not hard for someone to do something.

easier said than done informal used for saying that something is a good idea but will be difficult to achieve: Some people want the UN to withdraw, but that's easier said than done.

easy come, easy go spoken used for saying that someone has spent money quickly, after getting it easily, and that they should not worry because they have spent it.

easy does it informal used for saying that you are doing something much better than a famous person.

easy on sb mainly spoken to not be very angry or severe when you are dealing with someone: Go easy on her: she's only a kid.

easy on/with sth mainly spoken used for telling someone not to use, eat, or drink too much of something: Didn't the doctor tell you to go easy on the salt?

take it easy informal to rest and not do things that will make you tired: Take it easy and don't tire yourself out.

2 spoken used for telling someone to be calm when they are upset or annoyed: Hey, cool down! Take it easy.

easy in [i] to have a meal at home instead of in a restaurant: eat in

easy out [i] to have a meal in a restaurant instead of at home: People are spending more on eating out ≠ EAT IN

PHRASAL VERBS

eat a way [T] to eat away or eat into to gradually destroy something: ERODE: Within a few years inflation had eaten away all the economic gains.

eat a way at [T] to make someone feel more and more unhappy or worried: You could see that jealousy was eating away at her.

eat in [i] to have a meal at home instead of in a restaurant ≠ EAT OUT

eat into [T] 1 [eat into sth] if an activity or cost eats into your time or money, it uses more of it than you intended: use up 2 [eat into sth] same as eat away: The river had eaten into the bank, and part of it had collapsed.

eat up [i] to have a meal in a restaurant instead of at home: People are spending more on eating out ≠ EAT IN

eat up 1 [i/IT] mainly spoken to eat all of something: Come on, eat up your broccoli. 2 [I] to use large amounts of your available time or money: CONSUME: Having children eats up a lot of a family’s income. 3 [I] eat up sth to travel a particular distance easily and steadily: They drove on, eating up the distance between themselves and home. 4 be eaten up by/with sth to feel a negative emotion so strongly that it is difficult to think about anything else: Paula was eaten up by guilt for days. 5 eat it up informal to like something so much that you want to hear or see more: The press argued over the book, and the public was eating it up.

Other ways of saying eat

have breakfast/lunch/dinner to eat a particular meal: Have you had breakfast yet? He phoned while we were having lunch.

have something to eat to eat something or to have a meal: We'll stop and have something to eat when we get to Newcastle.

snack/have a snack to eat something small between your main meals: We usually have a drink and a snack around 11. No snacking, now!

grab a bite (to eat) informal to eat a snack or small meal when you do not have much time: Maybe we could grab a bite at Charlie’s before the film.

eat up to finish all the food you have been given: Eat up! There’s plenty more.

nibble (at) to take very small bites from your food: The nibbler ate her sandwich politely, waiting for the others to arrive.

chew on to use your teeth to break food up slowly in your mouth: He was chewing on a piece of celery.

munch or munch at to eat something noisily and enthusiastically: The kids were munching crisps in front of the TV.

stuff yourself informal to eat so much that you feel ill or uncomfortable: I'm not surprised you feel sick, the way you stuffed yourself last night.

eatable /eɪˈtiːəbl/ adj good enough to eat, or safe to eat

eater /ˈeɪtə(r)/ noun [c] 1 someone who eats in a particular way: a messy/noisy eater a healthy/big/hearty eater (someone who eats a lot) He’s small, but he’s a healthy eater. a picky eater (someone who does not

meal) Do you want to grab a bite to eat before we go?

PHRASES

eat sb alive 1 eat sb alive/for breakfast/lunch to defeat or deal with someone easily 2 if insects eat you alive, they keep biting you: We were being eaten alive by midges.

eat like a bird to eat very little

eat like a horse informal to eat a lot

eat sb out of house and home humorous to eat too much of someone's food when you are a guest in their house

eat your heart out humorous used for saying that you are doing something much better than a famous person does it

eat your words informal to admit that you were wrong about something

have sb eating out of your hand to make someone like or admire you so much that they agree with everything that you say

what's eating sb? spoken used for asking why someone is annoyed or unhappy

→ HUMBLY2

PHRASAL VERBS

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like many foods) They have a four-year-old child who is a very picky eater. 2 a person or animal that eats a particular type of food: a meat eater
eatery /ˈiːtəri/ noun [C] mainly American mainly journalism a restaurant
eating apple /ˈiːtiŋ ˈæpl/ noun [C] an apple that you eat raw, not a cooking apple
eating disorder /ˈiːtiŋ dɪsˈɔː(r)ɪdər/ noun [C] a medical condition such as anorexia or bulimia in which someone tries to control their weight in a way that makes them ill
eats /iːts/ noun [plural] informal food or meals, usually at a social event: It won’t cost anything, except for booze and eaves

eau-de-cologne /ˌoʊ də ˈkɔlən/ noun [C/U] a liquid with a pleasant smell that you put on your body. It does not smell as strong as perfume.
eaves /iːvz/ noun [plural] the bottom edge of a roof that continues out over the walls
eavesdrop /ˈiːvz.draʊp/ verb [I] to listen to other people’s conversation without them knowing that you are listening

eBay /ˈeɪbɔɪ/ TRADMARK a website where people buy and sell things by AUCTIONING them (= selling them to the person who offers most money)
ebb /eb/ noun [singular] 1 ebb or ebb tide the process in which the sea level on a coast becomes lower 2 a period when something gradually becomes smaller or less: an apparent ebb in the fighting

**PHRASES:**
be at/reach (a) low ebb to be in a very small, weak, or unsuccessful state: My confidence was at its lowest ebb
the ebb and flow 1 the way that a situation keeps changing between two states, for example in a game, fight, or argument: the ebb and flow of debate 2 a situation in which something keeps becoming larger or stronger, and then smaller or weaker: the ebb and flow of their political power

**ebb** /ɪb/ verb [I] mainly literary 1 if the tide ebbs, the sea’s level on a coast gradually becomes lower. A more usual word is go out. 2 ebb or ebb away to gradually become smaller or less 3 ebb or ebb away if someone’s life is ebbing or ebbing away, they are slowly dying

**PHRASE:**
ebb and flow 1 to keep becoming smaller or weaker and then larger or stronger: Enthusiasm for reform ebbed and flowed. 2 to keep changing between two states: The battle ebbed and flowed around them.

**Ebola** /ɪˈbəloʊ/ or **Ebola virus** noun [U] MEDICAL a serious disease that causes you to lose blood from all parts of your body and usually results in death

**ebony** /ˈebəni/ noun [C] a tree with hard dark wood 1a. [U] the wood of an ebony tree 2a. [U] mainly literary a dark black colour

**ebony** /ˈebəni/ adj mainly literary dark black in colour

**e-book** noun [C] COMPUTING a book published on the Internet = ELECTRONIC BOOK

**ebullient** /ɪˈbjuːlənt/ adj formal very happy and enthusiastic — ebullience noun [U]

**e-business** noun BUSINESS, COMPUTING [U] business done on the Internet a. [C] a company that operates on the Internet = DOT.COM

**EBV** /j; biː/ noun [U] see Epstein-Barr virus

**the EC** /j; iː/ noun European Community: the old name for the EU or European Union

**e-cash** noun [U] money that exists in electronic form and is used to pay for things over the Internet

**eccentric** /ɪˈkɛntrɪk/ adj someone who is eccentric often behaves in slightly strange or unusual ways: She’s regarded as being rather eccentric. a rather eccentric genius. a used about actions, decisions, or things that people make that are strange or unusual: a rather eccentric decision by the referee. an eccentric family tradition — eccentrically /ɪˈkɛntrɪkli/ adv

**eccentric** /ɪˈkɛntrɪk/ noun [C] someone who behaves in an eccentric way

**eccentricity** /ɪˈkɛntrɪsɪtɪ/ noun [U] strange or unusual behaviour: Mrs Morton was well known for her eccentricity. a. [C] an idea, action, or habit that is strange or unusual: Oh that’s just one of Carol’s little eccentricities.

**Eccles cake** /ˈɛklz kek/ noun [C] a type of small cake filled with dried CURRANTS (= fruit).

**ecclesiastic** /ˌiːklɪsˈɪstɪk/ or **ecclesiastical** /ˌiːklɪsˈɪstɪk/ adj relating to the Christian Church

**ECG** /j; jɪː/ noun [U] MEDICAL a machine used in hospitals for showing how well someone’s heart is beating. The picture it shows or prints is also called an ECG.

**echelon** /ˈɛkələn/ noun [C] 1 one of the levels of status or authority within an organization, or the people at that level: upper/lower echelons the upper echelons of power 2 an arrangement of soldiers, ships, or aircraft in which each one is slightly to the right or left of the one in front

**echidna** /ˈɛkɪdnə/ noun [C] a small Australian animal that eats ants and other insects

**echinacea** /ˌɛkɪˈneɪsə/ noun [U] a plant used in ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE to help your IMMUNE SYSTEM fight illness

**echo** /ˈɛkəʊ/ verb ★★ 1 [I] if a noise echoes, it is repeated because the sound hits a surface and returns: +around/round/through Her question echoed around the room. + across The hoot of a coyote echoed across the canyon. 1a. [U] if a building, space, or room echoes, noises are repeated there because it is large and empty: She led him along deserted echoing corridors. 1b. if a place echoes with a particular sound, it is filled with that sound: +with The theatre echoed with laughter. 2 [I] to express the ideas or feelings that someone else has expressed: Her feelings are echoed by other parents whose kids have left home. + Blake echoed the views of many players. 2a. to say the same words that someone else has said 3 [I] to repeat a quality or situation: The Victorian theme is echoed in the furnishings. ★ This pattern of increased sales was echoed across Europe.

**PHRASE:** echo in your mind/head if something that you have heard echoes in your mind, you seem to keep hearing it

**echo** /ˈɛkəʊ/ or **plural echoes** noun [C] ★ 1 a noise that is repeated because the sound hits a surface and returns: the echo of footsteps in the alley 2 an idea or phrase that is like one that has been expressed before: His argument contains clear echoes of 1960s free-market philosophy. 2a. something that is very like a thing that happened or was produced before: the violence of the past and its recent echoes

**PHRASE:** find an echo (in) if an idea finds an echo in a group or country, people there agree with it

**éclair** /ˈelkɛr/ or **plural éclairs** noun [C] a type of cake shaped like a tube with chocolate on top and cream inside

**eclampsia** /ˌɛklæmpsiə/ noun [U] MEDICAL a medical condition in which a pregnant woman with high blood pressure has convulsions (= violent uncontrolled movements)

**éclat** /ˈelkla/ noun [U] literary very great success that everyone knows about

**eclectic** /ɪˈklɛktɪk/ adj formal an eclectic group of people, things, or ideas is interesting or unusual because it consists of many different types: an eclectic
eclipse /ɪˈklaɪp/ verb [T] 1 to make someone or something seem less successful or important, by becoming more successful or important than they are = over-shadow: His performance was eclipsed by Francisco's winning goal. • This traffic accident has eclipsed the two disasters on the railways last year. 2 ASTRONOMY to make the sun or moon become partly or completely dark because of the position of the sun, moon, and earth in relation to each other
eclipse² /ɪˈklaɪp/ noun 1 [C] ASTRONOMY a short period when all or part of the sun or moon becomes dark, because of the positions of the sun, moon, and earth in relation to each other. A total eclipse is when the sun or moon is completely covered. An eclipse of the sun is called a solar eclipse, and an eclipse of the moon is called a lunar eclipse. 2 [singular/collective] a time when someone or something starts to seem less successful or important, because another person or thing has become more successful or important than they are. The rise of one aristocratic family usually meant the eclipse of another.
• be in eclipse Their political power was in eclipse at the time.
eco- /ɪˈkəʊ// prefix relating to the environment: used with some nouns and adjectives: eco-sensitive management (= an eco-disaster = an accident that causes great harm to the environment)
eco-friendly adj designed to cause as little harm as possible to the environment: a new eco-friendly engine
ecolabel /ɪˈkəʊˌlɛb(ə)r/ noun [C] BUSINESS a label used to mark products that are produced, and that you can use and get rid of, without harming the environment
E. coli /j: kɒl@ɪ/ noun [U] BIOLOGY a type of bacteria in the stomach that can make you ill if it infects something that you eat or drink
ecological /ɪˈkəʊlɪk(ə)l/ adj [usually before noun] ★ 1 relating to the environment and the way that plants, animals, and humans live together and affect each other: worldwide ecological changes • The earthquake has caused an ecological disaster.
  —ecologically /ɪˈkəʊlɪk(ə)lɪ/ adv: an ecologically sound product • ecologically sensitive areas
ecologist /ɪˈkəʊlɒdʒɪst/ noun [C] 1 a scientist who studies the environment and the way that plants, animals, and humans live together and affect each other. 2 someone who believes that protecting the environment is important
ecology /ɪˈkəʊlɒdʒɪ/ noun ★ [U] the study of the environment and the way that plants, animals, and humans live together and affect each other ★ a [C] usually singular the relationship between the plants, animals, and the environment in a particular area: the ecology of the wetlands
e-commerce noun [U] BUSINESS the activity of buying and selling goods on the Internet
economic /ˈekəsɪmɪk, ˌekəˈsmɪk// adj ★★★ 1 [usually before noun] relating to the economy of a particular country or region: Economic growth is slowing down. • factors that hinder economic development a. relating to business, industry, and trade: an attack on the government's economic policies • New opportunities will emerge as the economic climate improves. b. relating to money: Such projects offer social and economic benefits to our local communities.
Collocation
Nouns frequently used with economic 1
 ● activity, crisis, development, downturn, growth, policy, recovery, reform, slowdown
2 not costing or spending much money = ECONOMICAL: We need to make economies in the main economies. 3 making satisfactory profit from business activities ≠UNECONOMIC: We are going to have to make some cutbacks in order to continue to be economic.
→ ECONOMICAL
economic /ˈekəsɪmɪk(ə), ˌekəˈsmɪk(ə)// adj ★ 1 not costing or spending much money: It would be more economical to switch the machine off at night. • the most economical way to run your new business 1a. used about something that is not expensive to make, buy, or use: The material is an economical substitute for plastic or steel. • 2a. used about a form of transport: an economical form of transport. 1b. used about someone who is careful about spending money: He always was economical when it came to buying presents. 2 not wasting anything: a beautifully economical process 2a. an economical movement is done with as little effort as possible: an economical gesture 2b. an economical way of speaking or writing does not use more words than are necessary: Garland's prose is economical and expressive.
PHRASE to be economical with the truth informal to say things that are not true, or to not tell everything that you know
Get it right: economic People often confuse economic and economical.
Use economical to describe methods, products, machines etc that are not expensive or do not waste money or other resources:
✓ They want people to buy more economic cars. ✓ They want people to buy more economical cars.
✓ Email is an efficient and economical way of contacting a large number of people. ✓ Email is an efficient and economical way of contacting a large number of people.
Use economic to describe things that are related to the economy of a country and how well it is performing:
✓ a long period of economical growth ✓ a long period of economic growth
✓ a serious economical crisis ✓ a serious economic crisis
economically /ˌekəsɪˈnʌmɪkli, ˌekəˈsmɪkli// adv ★★ 1 relating to economics or to the economy of a particular country or region: They dismiss the idea that high tax rates are economically harmful. • Politically and economically, the country is going through enormous changes. • economically important industry 2a. economically depressed/devastated/disadvantaged (=experiencing a lot of economic problems) help for some of the country's economically depressed communities 1a. in ways relating to money: The project is both technically and economically feasible. • Is your life going to be economically better than your parents' lives? 2b. He was still economically dependent on his mother. • economically active people (=who are earning money) 2 in a careful way, so that there is very little waste: The average domestic heating system could be run much more economically.
→ economically
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→ economically
the economies of scale noun [plural] BUSINESS reductions in the cost of making and selling products that are made possible because a business is very large
economist /ɪˈkɒmənɪst/ noun [C ★
1 an expert in economics, especially one who advises a government department, business, or organization
2 someone who studies or teaches economics

economize /ɪˈkɒmənaɪz/ verb [i] to use something such as money or fuel very carefully, so that you waste as little as possible: + on Economizing on food is the only choice we have.

economy /ɪˈkɒnəmi/ noun ★★★
1 [C] the system by which a country’s trade, industry, and money are organized: a modern industrial economy ♦ the high-growth economies of Southeast Asia ♦ a market-capitalist planned economy 1a. the whole of a country’s business, industry, and trade, and the money that they produce: Between 1962 and 1988 the economy grew at an average of about 3 per cent per year. ♦ boost/stimulate/revive the economy (= make it stronger) The government has promised to boost the flagging economy. 1b. a country considered as an economic system: three of the fastest-growing economies in the Asia-Pacific region
2 [U] the careful use of money, products, or time so that very little is wasted: In those days, fuel economy was a central factor in car design. ♦ The audit will concentrate on the economy and efficiency of production. 2a. [U] the use of the smallest number of words or movements needed to express or do something: - of The play achieves its effects with a terrific economy of language.

2b. economies [plural] ways of saving money: make economies I’m sure, if we make a few economies, we’ll be able to afford it. ECONOMIES OF SCALE.
3 [U] The railway station was built on the edge of the city.

ecotourism /ɪˈkɒtərərɪzm/ noun [U] TOURISM the cheapest seats on a plane — e economy class adj, adv

economy class syndrome noun [U] informal DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS

economy drive noun [C] a period when you try to spend less money than usual

ecosystem /ɪˈkɒsɪstəm/ noun [C] BIOLOGY all the plants and animals in a particular area, considered as a system with parts that depend on one another

ecoterrorist /ɪˈkɒtərɪərɪst/ noun [C] someone who tries to stop or damage organizations that cause harm to the environment — ecoterrorism noun [U]

ecotourism /ɪˈkɒtʊərtɜːrɪz(ə)m/ noun [U] TOURISM the business of creating and selling holidays that give people the chance to learn about a natural environment, and cause as little damage to the environment as possible — ecotourist noun [C]

ecry /ɪˈkrəriː/ adj very pale brown — in cri noun [U]

ectasy /ˈɛkstəsi/ noun [C/U] 1 a feeling of great happiness and pleasure, often sexual pleasure 2 mainly literary an extreme emotional religious state during which you do not realize what is happening around you

PHRASE: be in/into ecstatics to talk/start to talk in a very excited way about something that you like or admire: They went into ecstatics over the beauty of the countryside.

Ecstasy /ˈɛkstəsi/ noun [U] an illegal drug that young people take, especially in NIGHTCLUBS. Ecstasy is often called E.

ecstatic /ˈɛkstətɪk/ adj extremely happy or pleased — ecstatically /ɪkˈstætɪkli/ adv

ECT /; j: ‘tɪː/ noun [U] MEDICAL electroconvulsive therapy: a medical treatment for serious mental illness in which electricity is passed through your brain

ectopic /ˈɛkˈtɒpɪk/ adj MEDICAL an ectopic pregnancy is one in which a baby starts to grow outside its mother’s womb

Ecuadorean /ˈɛkwədɔːriən/ adj, noun see Nationalities table

ecumencial /ˌjɪkjʊˈmenɪk(ə)n/ adj encouraging different Christian churches to work and worship together: an ecumenical conference

eczema /ˈɛksmə, American ɪɡˈzɪmoʊ/ noun [U] a medical condition that makes your skin dry, sore, and red

ed. abbrev 1 edition 2 editor 3 education

Edam /ɨˈdæm/ noun [C/U] a round, light yellow cheese covered with wax, made in the Netherlands

EDC /j: d: /sc/noun [U] COMPUTER computing electronic data capture: the process of collecting information using a computer

eddy /ed/ noun [C] a current of water or air that moves against the main current in a circular pattern

Eden /ɨˈdæn/ noun 1 Eden or the Garden of Eden in the Bible, the beautiful place where the first humans, Adam and Eve, lived 2 [C] a beautiful peaceful place: The city is a remote and beautiful Eden.

edge /edʒ/ noun ★★★
1 part furthest out
2 sharp side of blade/tool
3 a border of sth

PHRASE: a edge border a border of sth

2 sharp side of blade/tool

5 strange quality

3 angry tone in voice + PHRASES

edge of

PHRASES: live on the edge to have a life with many dangers and risks, especially because you like to behave in an extreme and unusual way: Despite the apparent respectability, he was a man who liked to live on the edge.

on edge nervous and unable to relax because you are worried: The events of the past few days had left her feeling tense and on edge.

on the edge or close to the edge so unhappy or confused that you are close to doing something silly or becoming mentally ill: He came close to the edge after losing his bike and his job in the same year.

on the edge of sth nearly in a particular state or condition: He seemed to be poised on the edge of Hollywood success.

PHRASE: be in ecstatics over the beauty of the countrieside.

Ecstasy /ˈɛkstəsi/ noun [U] an illegal drug that young people take, especially in NIGHTCLUBS. Ecstasy is often called E.

ECT /; j: ‘tɪː/ noun [U] MEDICAL electroconvulsive therapy: a medical treatment for serious mental illness in which electricity is passed through your brain

edgeways /ˈɛdʒweɪz/ or edgewise /ˈɛdʒweɪz/ adv sideways: Pack the plates edgeways with plenty of paper between them.
edging /ˈɛdʒɪŋ/ noun [U] something that forms the edge of something else: table linen with lace edging

edgy /ˈɛdʒi/ adj 1 in a bad mood because you are worried or nervous = irritably 1a. used about a situation when it is difficult to feel calm because people are angry or upset: Talks between the nations were reportedly edgy today. 2 music, films, books etc that are edgy are strange in a way that is interesting or exciting

editor /ˈɛdɪt(ə)r/ noun [C] formal an official order given by a computer or computer program to the movement of information between computers in different companies using a network, for example the Internet

edible /ˈɛdɪbl/ adj food that is edible is safe or good enough to eat ≠ INEDIBLE: edible mushrooms  • The food in the cafeteria is barely edible (=it tastes very bad).

edict /ˈɛdɪkt/ noun [C] formal an official command: Royal edict

edification /ˌɛdɪfɪˈkeɪʃn/ noun [U] formal for sb’s edification done in order to increase someone’s knowledge or improve their character

edifice /ˈɛdɪfɪs/ noun [C] formal 1 a large impressive building 2 a complicated system or policy: The whole edifice of EU environmental policy is threatened by this policy.

edify /ˈɛdɪfaɪ/ verb [I] formal to teach someone something that increases their knowledge or improves their character

edifying /ˈɛdɪf(ɪ)ŋ/ adj formal teaching you something that increases your knowledge or improves your character

edit /ˈɛdɪt/ verb [I]  • to make a book or document ready to be published by correcting the mistakes and making other changes: Her original text has been heavily edited (=changed a lot). 1a. COMPUTING to make changes to a computer file on screen: The program enables you to copy and edit files in the usual way. 1b. to make changes to a film, or to a television or radio programme before it is shown or broadcast: The segment, once edited, ran to 12 minutes. 2 to be the editor in charge of a newspaper or magazine: He edited the letters of Matthew Arnold.

PHRASE: verb  • edit out [T] to remove parts of a film, television, or radio programme that are not wanted before it is shown or broadcast = cut

edit/ediˈtɪʃn/ noun [C] the process of editing something such as a book, document, or film: The text is very messy and needs a close edit. 2 [U] COMPUTING a menu in some computer programs that you can use to cut, copy, or move parts of a document or file, or look for particular words in it

edited /ˈɛdɪtɪd/ adj an edited account of an event is not exactly true or accurate

eduction /ˌɛdjuˈkeɪʃn/ noun [C] a set of copies of a newspaper or magazine that are published at the same time. The letters appeared in the Sunday edition of the local newspaper. • a copy of the latest edition of our magazine • the December edition of Homes and Gardens

   1a. a set of copies of a book that are published at the same time. A new edition of a book is different in some way from the edition before. A set of copies that are exactly the same as the set before is called a reprint: He had an entry in the 1993 edition of the Guinness Book of Records. • This remark did not appear in revised editions of the work.

editor /ˈɛdɪtər/ noun [C]  • editor-in-chief 1 someone whose job is to be in charge of a newspaper, magazine, or news organization: the political/sports/fashion editor  • the BBC’s foreign affairs editor  → EDITOR-IN-CHIEF 2 someone whose job is to edit books, documents, or films: She worked as a script editor for years. 2a. someone who produces a book by choosing, arranging, and explaining things that other people have written: the editor of the four-volume History of Literature 2b. someone whose job is to produce books for a publisher by finding writers and working with them

EDITORIAL /ˈɛdɪtəriəl/ adj relating to the process of EDITING of books, magazines, newspapers etc —editorially adv

EDITORIALISE /ˌɛdɪtərɪəlaɪz/ verb [I] to let your opinions show in a piece of writing where you should only be giving facts

editor-in-chief /ˈɛdɪtər ɪn ˈtʃiːf/ noun [C] the most senior editor working on a newspaper or magazine who decides what will be printed in it

editorial program /ˈɛdɪtəriəl prəˈɡræm/ noun [C] COMPUTING a piece of software that allows the user to choose parts of a file and change them, get rid of them, or add things to them

editorship /ˌɛdɪtərʃɪp/ noun [U] the job of being the editor of a newspaper or magazine

edit suite /ˈɛdɪt suɪt/ noun [C] CINEMA British a room containing equipment for editing films or television programmes

edu /ˈɛd/jʊ/ abbrev COMPUTING educational institution: used in the email and website addresses of some colleges and schools, especially in the US

educate /ˈɛdjuˈkeɪt/ verb ⋆⋆⭐ [T] often passive to teach someone, usually for several years, especially at a school, college, or university: educate sb at sth He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. ⋆ more and more parents are choosing to educate their children at home. ⋆ educate sb at sth The mining museum was built to educate people about their local history. ⋆ educate sb to do sth Our job is to educate young people to think about the environment.

Someone who teaches students about particular subjects, usually in a school or university, educates them: He was educated at a school in Paris. ⋆ The government spends more on weapons than on educating its children.

Someone who looks after their children until the children are adults and who teaches them about life brings them up: I was brought up in the city. ⋆ My parents brought me up to always tell the truth.

educated /ˈɛdjuˈkeɪtɪd/ adj an educated person has received a good education and has a lot of knowledge ≠ UNEDUCATED: a dating agency for educated, professional people a. used about the standard to which someone has been educated: Interpreters should be highly educated as well as fluent. ⋆ well educated The people who work here are well educated and open-minded. b. used about the place or way in which someone was educated: a Princeton-educated lawyer ⋆ traditionally educated students

PHRASE: an educated guess a guess that is likely to be right because it is based on knowledge of the situation

education /ˌɛdjuˈkeɪʃn/ noun ⋆⭐⭐ [U] the activity of educating people in schools, colleges, and universities, and all the policies and arrangements concerning this: Education is a major concern for the British government. 1b. [C] usually singular someone’s experience of learning or being taught: I came over to England to complete my education. ⋆ the responsibility of parents in the educational process 1c. [U] the activity of teaching about a particular subject: religious/science/sex education ⋆ in education in art and design 1b. [C] [usually singular] someone’s experience of learning or being taught: I came over to England to complete my education. ⋆ the responsibility of parents in the educational process 1d. [C] ⋆ university education She was the first in her family to enjoy the privilege of a university education. 1c. [only by a university] relating to education: the Scottish Education Department ⋆ the government’s education policies
ed·uc·a·tional / ɪˈdʒʊˌkeɪʃənl / adj ▲▼
1 relating to education: better educational opportunities for women ● educational achievements/qualifications
2 giving people useful knowledge: INFORMATIVE: We found the programme educational and informative.
3 an educational video
—educationally adv

ed·uc·a·tional·ist / ɪˌdʒʊˌkeɪˈʃənlɪst / noun [C] an expert in education

ed·uc·a·tive / ɪˈdʒʊˌkætɪv / adj providing someone with education

educator / ɪˈdʒʊˌkeɪtər / noun [C] mainly American someone who teaches or who is involved in running a school 2 someone who is an expert in education

edu·ta·ment / ɪˈdʒʊtmənt / noun [U] television programme—mainly American—of movies, software etc that entertain you while you teach them something

E·dward·ian / ɪˈdʒʊˌdɔːrɪən / adj in the styles that were popular in the UK at the time of King Edward VII: Edwardian furniture

—ee / ɪ/ suffix 1 used with some verbs to make nouns meaning someone who is affected by an action: a trainee 2 an employee used with some verbs to make nouns meaning someone who does an action: an escapee

the E·E·A / j iː / noun [singular] ECONOMICS European Economic Area: an economic group formed in 1994 consisting of the member states of the European Union and Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway

the E·E·C / j iː / noun [C] the old name of the EUROPEAN UNION

E·E·G / ɪː / noun [C] MEDICAL 1 electroencephalogram: a medical test of electrical activity in the brain 2 electroencephalograph: a machine that records electrical activity in the brain

E·E·K / ɪˌkɪk / interjection often humorous used for showing or pretending that you are frightened

e·el / ɛˈl / noun [C] a long thin fish that looks like a snake and can be eaten

e·en / ɛn / adv literary EVEN

e·er / ɛ(r) / adv literary EVER

e·erie / ˈɛri/ adj strange and mysterious, and sometimes frightening: There was an eerie resemblance between them. —eery adj: The forest was eerily silent.

eff / ɛf / PHR ASAL VERB eff off [ɪ] British impolite used as a less offensive way of saying ‘fuck off’, which is a very offensive way of telling someone to go away or saying that you do not agree with them

eff·face / ɛfˈeɪs / verb [T] literary to make something disappear

—effect / ɪˈfekt / noun ★★★
1 [C/U] a change that is produced in one person or thing by another: + on/upon Scientists are studying the chemical's effect on the environment. + have an effect on sth Any change in lifestyle will have an effect on your health. + have some/little/no effect The NAFTA agreement has had little effect on the lives of most Americans. + an adverse/beneficial effect (=a bad/good effect) East German companies were suffering the adverse effects of German economic union. + reduce/couter the effect(s) of sth Relaxation can reduce the negative effects of stress on the immune system.

2 [C] an appearance or reaction that is deliberately produced, for example by a writer, artist, or musician: The bold colours in this room create a dramatic effect.

That's exactly the effect I wanted. + get/produce/achieve an effect Students should learn how they can achieve different stylistic effects in their writing. 2a. effects [plural] CINEMA special artificial images and sounds created for a film = SPECIAL EFFECTS: I didn't think much of the plot, but the effects were amazing. 2b. [usually singular] an artificial appearance given to a surface or to an object: marble-effect wallpaper

3 [C] [usually singular] something that regularly happens, according to a law, for example in science: the Doppler effect + what economists call 'the multiplier effect'

4 effects or personal effects [plural] formal the things that belong to you

PHRASES come into effect if a new rule or law comes into effect, it starts to be used: The law came into effect on New Year's Day. + from The new Council Tax rates came into effect from 1st April.

for effect if you do something for effect, you do it in order to impress people: ‘Still...’ she said and paused, for effect.

in effect 1 used for giving a summary of what you think the situation really is: In effect, this means we’ll all have to work longer hours for the same pay. 2 if a law or rule is in effect, it is in operation: There's still a flood watch in effect across much of southwestern Ohio.

put/carry/bring sth into effect to start to use a plan or idea so that it becomes real and has practical results: I hope the government will put the report's main recommendations into effect.

take effect 1 to start to produce the results that were intended: Try to relax for a couple of hours until the pills take effect. + Measures to reduce costs are beginning to take effect. 2 if a new rule or law takes effect, it starts to be used: The new timetable will take effect from the beginning of May.

to the effect that or to this/that effect used for showing that you are giving a general idea of what someone said instead of their actual words: Harry murmured something to the effect that they would all meet Margaret soon enough. + Then Sally said, 'Who is this then?' or words to that effect.

to good/full/little etc effect used for saying what kind of result something has: He has used my advice to good effect. + The concerto’s slow movement was used to memorable effect in the film 2001. + He turned the key in the ignition but to no effect.

with effect from formal used for saying when something will start: + People’s sanctions have been imposed with effect from 1 April. + I am resigning from the party with immediate effect.

→ side EFFECT

effect / ɪˈfekt / verb [T] formal ★★ to make something happen = BRING ABOUT: If correctly administered, such drugs can effect a radical cure.

effective / ɪˈfektɪv / adj ★★★
1 someone or something that is effective works well and produces the result that was intended ≠ INEFFECTIVE: You need more effective communication within the organization. + Humour is often far more effective than shouting. + The troops should be deployed where they will be most effective. + against The new vaccine is highly effective against all strains of the disease. + effective way/method/means This is a very effective way of controlling pests and weeds. 2a. attractive or impressive: He was producing a definite effect. The decorations are easy to make, yet very effective.

Collocation

Nouns frequently used with effective 1
• deterrent, intervention, means, mechanism, method, strategy, treatment, way

2 formal when a law or agreement becomes effective, it officially begins to be used: + from Government ministers reached a 30-month agreement, effective from 1 July.

3 [only before noun] used for saying what the situation really is, although its appearance or official description might be different: The US military is in effective control of the entire region. 3a. used for saying what is really having a particular effect, although other things may be involved in a situation: the effective agents in the spread of the disease —effectiveness noun [U]

Collocation

Adjectives frequently used with effective 1
• adverse, beneficial, cumulative, damaging, detrimental, dramatic, harmful, immediate, knock-on, major, negative, positive, profound, serious, significant, substantial

2 [C] an appearance or reaction that is deliberately
effectively /ɪˈfektɪvli/ adv ★★★
1 used for saying what the situation really is, although its appearance or official description might be different: With Australia 24 points ahead at half-time, the game was effectively over.
2 in a way that works well and produces the result that you intended: The quality of the medical procedure has not been proven.

effectual /ɪˈfektjuəl/ adj  formal producing the effect that you intended = EFFECTIVE —effectually adv
effeminate /ɪˈfɛmɪnət/ adj an effeminate man looks, or behaves like a woman —effetely adv
effervescent /ɪˈfɛvərsənt/ adj 1 producing a lot of small bubbles of air or gas = FIZZY 2 lively and enthusiastic = BUBBLY: an effervescent personality —effervescence noun [U]
effete /ɪˈfɛt/ adj mainly literary not strong or brave, or weak in moral character a, used about a man who looks or behaves like a woman = effemine adv
efficacious /ɪˈfɪkəs/ adj forming the effect that you intended = EFFECTIVE
efficacy /ɪˈfɪkəsɪ/ noun [U] formal effectiveness in producing the result that you intended: The efficacy of the treatment had been proven.
efficiency /ɪˈfɪʃni/ noun [U] ★★ the ability to work well and produce good results by using the available time, money, supplies etc in the most effective way ≠ INEFFICIENCY: the search for lower costs and greater efficiency = The inspectors were impressed by the speed and efficiency of the new system. = improve/increase efficiency The new technology is aimed at improving efficiency and customer service.
efficient /ɪˈfɪʃnt/ adj ★★★ something that is efficient works well and produces good results by using the available time, money, supplies etc in the most effective way ≠ INEFFICIENT: The new machine is far more efficient than the old one. = efficient way/method The most efficient way to plan is to put your tasks in order of priority.
main = efficient use of sth This process makes efficient use of limited resources. a, someone who is efficient works well and quickly and is good at organizing their work in the way that gets the best results: The hotel's staff are friendly and efficient. = highly efficient He became a highly efficient General Secretary.
= efficiently adv
effigy /ɪˈfɪdʒi/ noun [C] a model of someone, especially one destroyed in a protest against them
effing /ɪˈfɪŋ/ adj, adv impolite used for emphasizing what you are saying, especially when you are angry or annoyed, but want to avoid the more offensive word 'fucking': He was calling her an effing this, an effing that.

PHRASE: effing and blinding swearing and using rude words
effluent /ɪˈfljuənt/ noun [C/U] liquid waste such as sewage (=human waste) or waste from a factory
effort /ɪˈfɔːt/ noun ★★★
1 [C/U] an attempt to do something that is difficult or that involves hard work: an effort to do sth The restructuring was part of an effort to boost company profits.
2 [sing/pl] effort put in the work: in an effort to do sth Detectives are talking to other witnesses in an effort to corroborate her confession.
3 make an effort to do sth I've made an effort to drink less tea and coffee.
4 make little/no effort The drivers made no efforts to check their vehicles.
5 make an effort of will/ imagination/ memory She was trembling violently, but with a determined effort of will she stopped.
6 despite sb's efforts The man died despite the doctors' efforts to revive him.
7 a concerted/joint effort (=made together) a concerted effort by the nations of the world to protect our environment

Collocation
Adjectives frequently used with effort 1
- big, brave, combined, concerted, determined, feeble, great, individual, joint, last-ditch, massive, solo, sustained, team, vain, valiant, wasted
effortlessly /ɪˈfɔːt(ə)li/ adv done well or successfully and without any effort: jumps executed with seemingly effortless skill — effortlessly adv
effrontery /ɪˈfrɒntri/ noun [U] formal behaviour that is rude or that shows a lack of respect
effusion /ɪˈfjuːʃən/ noun [C/U] mainly literary an act of expressing feelings in an extremely enthusiastic way
effusive /ɪˈfjuːsiv/ adj expressing happiness, admiration, praise etc in an extremely enthusiastic way: effusive praise — effusively adv — effusiveness noun [U]

E-FIT /ji ə fɪt/ TRADMARK a picture of the face of someone who police think committed a crime, created using software and someone's description of the person
EFL /iː ˈɛfl/ noun [U] English as a Foreign Language: English taught to people who need to learn it for their studies or their career, and who do not live in an English-speaking country = EAL, ESL, ESOL

e-fraud noun [U] BUSINESS the activity of obtaining money illegally using the Internet
EFTA /eɪˈfɪːtə/ the European Free Trade Association: an organization of European countries that have a special trade relationship with the European Union but are not members of it
EFTPOS /ɪˈfɪpsəʊs/ noun [U] BUSINESS electronic funds transfer at point of sale: a system of paying for goods by moving money by computer from the customer's bank account to the account of the company or person they have bought from

e.g. or eg /iː ˈɛɡ/: dʒiːz/ abbrev for example: used for giving an example of what you mean: Give details of relevant work experience during the last two years, e.g. weekend or holiday jobs.

From the Latin expression exempli gratia, which means 'for the sake of example'.
egalitarian /iːɡəlˈtɪərɪən/ adj supporting a social system in which everyone has equal status and the same money and opportunities: They were all working towards a society run on egalitarian principles.
egalitarianism noun [U]
egestion /iːdʒɪstʃən/ noun [U] BIOLOGY the process by which the body gets rid of solid waste through the anus = EXCRETION
The round object with a shell that a female bird produces and a baby bird develops in is called an egg. The mother bird lays an egg, and later the egg hatches and the baby bird that develops: a hen’s pigeon’s sparrow’s egg + an ostrich egg. A chicken’s egg used as food: We had scrambled eggs for breakfast. + an egg sandwich

An object made by a young insect, frog, snake etc, that a young animal comes out of is called an egg.

A cell produced inside a woman or female animal that develops into a baby if it is fertilized by a sperm (a male cell) is called an egg.

An egg is spontaneous and need not care about them and need not care about them. A bird with long legs that lives near water is called a white bird.

A white animal that develops into a baby if it is fertilized is called a bird.

A small container for holding a boiled egg while you eat it is called a cup.

Make a drink made from eggs mixed with milk, sugar, and alcohol

An American term: aubergine

An egg is the hard outside layer of an egg. It is a type of paint that is slightly shiny.

An egg is made up of white-yellow in colour, not very shiny, or thin and delicate: eggshell enamel + eggshell china ➔ walk

A small glass object containing sand, used for measuring the time that you need to boil an egg is called a timer.

A clear part of an egg that becomes white when you cook it is called a white.

A meeting of a business or group of people is called a General Meeting.

A special meeting of a business or group of people is called an Extraordinary General Meeting.

A phrase in a number 18

An object used as food is called an aubergine.

A term referring to a person’s thinking is called egocentric.

A term referring to a person’s thinking is called egoism.

A term referring to a person’s thinking is called egomania.

A term referring to a person’s thinking is called egotism.

A term referring to a person’s thinking is called egotist.

A term referring to a person’s thinking is called egotistical.

A phrase in a person’s thinking is called a trip.

The use of the Internet by government for, example to give information to the public or to allow people to vote from their computer is called e-government.

A term referring to a person’s thinking and need not care about them is called egocentric.

A term referring to a person’s thinking is called egomaniac.

A term referring to a person’s thinking is called egotistical.
were not supporters of either team. • of I didn’t like either of the candidates. 2a. used for adding that a negative statement is also true of another person or thing: We tried another method, but that didn’t work either. • It’s a problem I can’t solve, and I don’t think anyone else can either. 2b. used for adding a negative statement that emphasizes how good, bad, impressive etc something is: He did a superb job, and he didn’t have any help either.

→ ALSO

PHRASES

either...or ([...or]) used for showing two or more possibilities or choices: You must answer either yes or no. • You can contact us either by phone, by email, or by letter. • When there’s a crisis, they either do nothing or do something totally useless.

either...or used for saying that one of two things has to happen or be true: Either you come with us, or you stay at home with your mother. • He either forgot about the meeting or he deliberately stayed away – I don’t know which.

either side/end/hand etc each of two sides/ends/hands etc. Her parents were sitting on either side of her. • There were chairs at either end of the hall. • Pelham entered the room carrying a briefcase in either hand.

either way used for saying that it does not matter which of two things happens or is true, because the result will be the same: Perhaps the boy was really ill, or perhaps he was faking, no matter which they wouldn’t have to stop.

ejaculate /ɪdʒikjuleɪt/ verb [I/T1] 1 BIOLOGY if a man ejaculates, SEMEN comes out of his penis during sex 2 old-fashioned to suddenly say or shout something

ejaculation /ɪdʒıkjuˈleɪʃn/ noun 1 [C/U] the action of ejaculating 2 [C] old-fashioned a sudden loud remark or shout

eject /ɪdʒekt/ verb 1 [T] formal to make someone leave a place, especially using physical force: eject sb from a group of noisy protesters were ejected from the meeting. 1a. to force someone to leave a job or organization 2 [T] to make something come out from a machine, for example a dvd from a dvd player or a card from a computer 3 [I] if a pilot ejects, they are deliberately thrown out of their plane by their ejector seat, because the plane is likely to crash — ejection /ɪdʒekʃn/ noun [U]

ejector seat /ɪdʒektərˈsiːt/ noun [C] British a seat in a plane that will deliberately throw a pilot up and out into the air if the plane is likely to crash

eke /ɪk/ PHRASAL VERB eke out [T] to get just enough money or food to be able to continue to exist: eke out a living/existence The family barely manages to eke out a living from their small farm. a. to make something such as money or food last as long as possible: Their meagre supplies have to be eked out throughout the winter. — elaboration /ɪdʒıkjuˈleɪʃn/ noun 1 [C/U] the detail that makes something more interesting or complicated: I took no notice of John’s elaboration preparations for travel. b. used about something that has a lot of extra details or features that make it special: There are times when you need a more elaborate flower arrangement.

— elaborateness noun [U]

elaborate /ɪdʒəˈbreɪt/ verb [I] to give more details or information about something: — on The police refused to elaborate on the circumstances of the arrest. — elaboration /ɪdʒəˈbreɪʃn/ noun [U]

élan /ˈelən/ noun [U] mainly literary enthusiasm, confidence, and style

elapse /ɪˈleɪps/ verb [I] formal if time elapses, it passes: Another hour elapses and still the wind continued to howl.

elapsed time /ɪˈleɪpt / noun [U] the amount of time that has passed since a particular process started, especially compared with the amount of time that was calculated for it in a plan

elastic /ɪˈleɪstɪk/ noun [U] a material that stretches easily and can return to its original shape quickly. Elastic is often sewn into clothes to allow them to stretch.

elastic /ɪˈleɪstɪk/ adj 1 made of elastic: an elastic wristband 2 PHYSICS something that is elastic can be stretched easily and can then return to its original shape quickly. The elastic behaviour of some materials depends on the temperature and duration of the stress applied. 3 able to change when the situation changes: a man of rather elastic morals.

elasticity /ɪˈleɪstɪsɪti/ noun [U] 1 PHYSICS the ability of a substance to stretch easily and then return to its original shape quickly: the strength and elasticity of silk 2 the ability to change when the situation changes: the elasticity of the labour market 3 ECONOMICS the degree to which supply, demand etc changes according to other economic conditions that change, for example the price of goods

Elastoplast /ˈeləstəpləst/ TRADMARK British a type of plaster used for covering a cut in your skin

elated /ˈelətɪd/ adj extremely happy and excited

elation /ɪˈleɪʃn/ noun [U] a feeling of great happiness and excitement

elbow /ˈelbəʊ/ noun [C] 1 the part of the body where your arm, your elbow, bends

elbow room noun [U] 1 enough space around you so that you are comfortable 2 the freedom to do what you want, without other people annoying you

elder /ˈeldə(r)/ adj [only before noun] 1 older than someone, especially someone in your family: The elder son works on a farm. • elder brother/sister advice from my elder brother a. the person who is older, especially two people in the same family: The elder of the two had lost his job as a teacher. b. a member of a Christian church or other religious organization who is not a priest but who is in a position of authority in a small tree with black berries, that is used for covering a cut in your skin

—elderly /ˈeldə(r)i/ noun [C] usually plural 1 someone in your family or community who is older than you: We were always taught to respect our elders. 2a. an older and more experienced member of a group or organization who gives advice and makes decisions: a council of village elders • He had the support of party elders. 2b. a member of a Christian church or other religious organization who is not a priest but who is in a position of authority in a small tree with black berries, that is used for covering a cut in your skin

elbow grease noun [U] informal hard physical work that you do to clean something

elbow room noun [U] 1 enough space around you so that you are comfortable 2 the freedom to do what you want, without other people annoying you
IMPROVE YOUR WRITING SKILLS

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A. ADDING INFORMATION

You sometimes need to discuss several points, present a set of ideas or arguments, or describe a sequence of events. In such cases, you may want to show that you are adding another point. In this section, we describe some of the most useful ways of adding information, and we give advice about using them.

1. Adding information

You can use several expressions to show that you are adding information to the preceding sentence or paragraph. Here are the most common ones.

1.1. Using the adverb in addition

You can use in addition simply to add a new argument or new information. It can be used:
- at the beginning of the sentence, followed by a comma: After the election, we asked whether the parties should change their leaders, their policies, or both. In addition, we asked about voting preferences.
- inside the sentence, enclosed by commas: All students of French are required to take the language units each year and, in addition, to choose an integrated programme of study from other units.

BE CAREFUL! Many learners use and at the beginning of a sentence, as a way of adding new information: People have always tried to turn their dreams into reality. And they still continue to do so.

This structure gives the sentence a rather informal tone and should therefore not be used too often in more formal texts.

1.2. Using the determiners other and another or the adjectives further and next

You can use the determiners other or another to introduce an additional item.

One type of skin cancer is caused when skin that is not used to the sun is exposed to short bursts of strong sunlight. Other types of skin cancer are associated with continued exposure to the sun over a long period.

It is important to get your performers to keep the microphone as still as possible. Another point for them to remember is not to speak directly at the microphone but to aim instead just over the top of it.

You can use the adjective further with the same function.

It may be helpful to start therapy at home and continue in outpatients. A further possibility is to arrange for the patient to attend a psychiatric unit as a day patient.

Collocation

Nouns frequently used with the adjective further
- difficulty, evidence, example, explanation, factor, point, possibility, problem, reason

A further reason is that measures of this sort are best decided in Parliament, in accordance with the traditions of this country.

Note that you can also use further as an adverb, found mainly inside the sentence.

The article further suggests that these claims actually address small or unproven dangers.

The adjective next has a ‘temporal’ dimension: it shows that something comes after something else in time.

An important first step was to include these hospitals in the budgets of the regional health authorities. The next step was to devise a budget allocation procedure that reflected the health needs of different areas.

Once coins have been classified into groups, the next stage is to determine the exact date of a coin’s manufacture.

1.3. Using the prepositions in addition to and besides

A number of prepositions can be used to add new information. The most frequent of these is in addition to, which introduces the point to which you want to add something new. It can be followed by a noun or by a verb in the –ing form:

In addition to imitation, there are a number of other procedures designed to give the therapist some degree of control over the child’s language production.

In addition to imposing its own needs on the medium, advertising has immense ideological implications.

You can use besides in the same way, but it is less frequent than in addition to in academic writing and professional reports.

Besides its political and racial distribution, population density varied greatly.

Besides being paid less per hour, the majority of women employees work fewer hours than their male counterparts.

2. Adding and amplifying: using the adverbs moreover, furthermore, and besides

The expressions we discussed in section 1 are used simply for adding a new argument or new information. Sometimes, however, you may want to add a point – often a final point – that is more important fact or a more powerful argument than anything you have mentioned previously. In other words, you want to add but also to amplify. Here are some adverbs you can use for this purpose.

Moreover and furthermore are typically used at the beginning of the sentence, followed by a comma, but they sometimes occur within the sentence, usually enclosed by commas.

There was more than enough to do in repairing the faults of the existing system and correcting the injustices of the past. Moreover, the reforms had to be achieved with resources severely diminished by the efforts of war.

There was an assumption that whoever did take up the office would closely reflect Lee’s views. It was likely, moreover, that candidates would be restricted to former ministers and senior civil servants.

Science cannot provide that kind of certainty. Furthermore, it is often overlooked that we can only apply scientific method to a tiny fraction of the impressions upon which we act.
Comparing and Contrasting

Get it right: moreover

Many learners use moreover inappropriately, when they are simply adding new information or reformulating what has just been said.

✗ When the prisoner is released, his situation will be very painful because he will have to re-integrate into society. Moreover, he will have the greatest difficulties of integration because of his past as a prisoner.

✓ When the prisoner is released, his situation will be very painful because he will have to re-integrate into society. He will have the greatest difficulties of integration because of his past as a prisoner.

In this context moreover is not acceptable, because the second sentence is simply used to reformulate, and not for adding a final powerful argument.

BE CAREFUL! Learners often forget the comma after moreover and furthermore at the beginning of a sentence.

Besides introduces a final point or argument, especially one that is decisive. Its most typical position is at the beginning of the sentence, followed by a comma.

Even taped interviews can only be read with caution, since they may have been edited, and the reader will not be told how. Besides, it is an everyday experience that people are sometimes wrong in conversation, and may not remember events well.

BE CAREFUL! Learners often use besides. Although it is sometimes used in academic writing and professional reports, it is more typical of speech and informal writing.

BE CAREFUL! Many learners use parallel inappropriately. When they are simply adding new information or reformulating what has just been said, they are not using a grammatical device properly.

1. Comparing and contrasting

When you write an essay, report, or similar document, you often need to link two or more points, ideas, or situations by comparing and contrasting them, that is, by showing the similarities or differences between them. In this section, we describe some of the most useful ways of describing similarities and differences, and we give advice about using them.

1.1. Using nouns such as resemblance and similarity

You can use the nouns resemblance, similarity, parallel, and analogy to show that two points, ideas, or situations are similar in certain ways.

1.2. Using adjectives such as similar and same

You can use the adjectives analogous, common, comparable, identical, parallel, and similar to highlight the similarity between two or more points, ideas, situations, or people:

Animals possess thoughts, feelings and social systems which are analogous, if not identical, to those of humans.

All states share a common interest in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Winston Churchill died in 1965 and was given a State funeral comparable to that which had been given to the Duke of Wellington.

The procedure is identical to that of any other public bill.

A parallel but not identical distinction is between short-term and long-term memory.

The pattern of mortality is broadly similar for men and women.

The adjective same is always used before the noun:

The same pattern is also to be found in the discourse of parliamentary debates about apartheid.
5. Advice on avoiding errors

5.1 Using the ‘Get it right’ boxes
The Macmillan English Dictionary includes over 100 ‘Get it right’ boxes at individual dictionary entries. These boxes deal with many different issues that cause difficulties for learners. The following ‘Get it right’ boxes deal with problems relating to quantifiers:

**every, few, half, less, most, much, thousand**

R. SPELLING

English spelling is not always easy to get right, and everyone – including native speakers – makes mistakes occasionally. Many spelling mistakes (such as writing ‘receiv’ instead of ‘receive’) can be corrected by using a spellchecker. But some cannot, especially when they involve confusion between similar words. In this section, we describe the main categories of word that are regularly spelled wrongly, and we give advice about how to avoid these problems.

1. Homophones
A homophone is a word that sounds the same as another word, but has a different spelling and a different meaning. Homophones are a frequent source of errors, not only for learners of English but for native speakers too. Here are some homophones that learners sometimes confuse:

- **hole and whole**
  
  Hole is a noun, meaning ‘a gap or empty space’, whole is an adjective, meaning ‘complete’:
  
  ✗ Imagine spending your hole life with someone who you hate or regret marrying.
  ✓ Imagine spending your whole life with someone who you hate or regret marrying.

- **it’s and its**
  
  It’s is the short form of ‘it is’ or ‘it has’, its is the possessive form of it:
  
  ✗ It’s a time-saving machine.
  ✓ It’s a time-saving machine.
  ✓ It was a few hundred years after Caxton’s introduction of printing that censorship started its modern career.
  ✓ It was a few hundred years after Caxton’s introduction of printing that censorship started it’s modern career.

- **there and their**
  
  There is an adverb, their is the possessive form of they:
  
  ✗ But their are small towns or villages where people simply have no other choice.
  ✓ But there are small towns or villages where people simply have no other choice.
  ✓ In a democracy, people have power to make laws and decide their own future.
  ✓ In a democracy, people have power to make laws and decide their own future.

- **whether and weather**
  
  Whether is a conjunction, weather is a noun (‘What’s the weather like in Brazil?’):
  
  ✗ No-one knows weather this is true or not.
  ✓ No-one knows whether this is true or not.

- **who’s and whose**
  
  Who’s is the short form of ‘who is’ or ‘who has’, whose is the possessive form of who:
  
  ✗ There is an international organisation whose role is to keep peace and stability in that continent.

2. Easily confused pairs
There are many pairs of words that are easy to confuse, because they look similar and are (in most cases) related in some way. The ones that learners frequently confuse are described here. Check the dictionary entries for these words if you need more information.

2.1 Related nouns and verbs
Many pairs of nouns and verbs have closely related meanings but slightly different spellings. In most cases, there are differences in pronunciation too. Those pairs that frequently cause problems for learners include the following:

- **advise /ədˈvaɪz/ (verb) and advice /ədˈvaɪs/ (noun)**
  ✓ It can ruin your health instead of making you fit and I can only advise you not to let sport take over your life.
  ✓ It can ruin your health instead of making you fit and I can only advise you not to let sport take over your life.

- **analyse /ˈænaləs/ (verb) and analysis /ænəlɪsɪs/ (noun)**
  ✓ In favour of the written word, one can argue that it provides a more in-depth analyse, and thus provides even more information than the aural/visual media.
  ✓ In favour of the written word, one can argue that it provides a more in-depth analysis, and thus provides even more information than the aural/visual media.

- **believe /biˈliːv/ (verb) and belief /biˈliːf/ (noun)**
  ✓ To ask of anyone to forget their traditions and believes is to ask that person to forget who he is.
  ✓ To ask of anyone to forget their traditions and believes is to ask that person to forget who he is.

- **breathe /briːθ/ (verb) and breath /breθ/ (noun)**
  ✓ If you walk in a big city with thousands of cars passing by, you will feel that you can hardly breathe.
  ✓ If you walk in a big city with thousands of cars passing by, you will feel that you can hardly breathe.

- **effect /ɪˈfekt/ (verb) and effect /ɪˈfekt/ (noun)**
  ✓ When students are always going to cybercafes, their homework is affected.
  ✓ When students are always going to cybercafes, their homework is affected.

- **extend /ɪkˈstents/ (verb) and extent /ɪkˈstents/ (noun)**
  ✓ I would put it even more strongly: modern toys to a great extend cause this impoverishment of creativity.
  ✓ I would put it even more strongly: modern toys to a great extent cause this impoverishment of creativity.

- **live /lɪv/ (verb) and life /laɪf/ (noun, plural form lives)**
  ✓ They will be educated, and not only with books but about live itself.
  ✓ They will be educated, and not only with books but about life itself.

- **practise/præktɪs/ (verb) and practice/præktɪs/ (noun)**
  ✓ Extroverted learners who find many opportunities to practice language skills will be the most successful learners.
  ✓ Extroverted learners who find many opportunities to practise language skills will be the most successful learners.

✓ Second, this practise implies a cost that many universities cannot pay.
EXPAND YOUR VOCABULARY

These pages are designed to show you different ways of writing or speaking about three important areas of vocabulary – communication, emotions, and movement. Each section takes a ‘core’ word that you will probably use most of the time and gives you the most useful synonyms for it, as well as related words with a different part of speech. There are also notes that highlight some differences of register, grammar, and collocation. Some of the words are shown together with their opposites, e.g. satisfied and dissatisfied.

Contents

A. Words that describe Communication
1. Answer 4. Say 7. Tell
2. Argue 5. Speak
3. Ask 6. Talk

B. Words that describe Emotions
5. Enthusiastic/not enthusiastic

C. Words that describe Movement
1. Fast 4. Arrive 7. Travel
3. Leave 6. Run
A. WORDS THAT DESCRIBE COMMUNICATION

1. **Answer**

I asked him where he was going but he didn’t **answer**.

- She failed to **answer** most of the questions that were put to her.
- ‘I don’t know,’ she **answered** truthfully.
- He **answered that** he had seen them leaving together.

**Answer** is also an noun and is used in the phrases give an **answer** and in **answer to**: I’ll **give you a definite answer tomorrow**. He said nothing in **answer to** her question, but continued staring out of the window.

1.1 To answer someone

**reply** to answer someone: ‘I know,’ he **replied**.

- They got up and walked out before I had a chance to **reply**.
- When asked where she was going, she **replied that** it was none of their business.

**respond** to answer something that someone says, especially when they have challenged or criticized you: ‘I’m telling you it’s not true,’ Martinez **responded**.

- ‘Is there anything you would like to do today?’ he asked, but she didn’t **respond**.
- How do you **respond to** that suggestion that this is all the government’s fault?

**make a response** or **give a response** I called out to him, but he **made no response**.

- **Being an astute politician, she gave a careful response** that completely failed to answer the question.

**Note:** **Reply** and **respond** mean more or less the same as **answer**, but are a little more formal, and are used mainly in written English.

**retort** to answer someone immediately in an angry or humorous way: ‘Mind your own business!’ she **retorted**.

- Democrats **retorted that** the plan leaves millions of poor Americans in the cold.

**answer sb back** to reply rudely to someone who has more authority than you: Don’t you dare **answer me back**!

1.2 To answer someone at a later time

**get back to sb** if you get back to someone, you give them an answer at a later time because you were not able to do it earlier: He said he was busy but promised he **would get back to me** in the afternoon.

**phone back** or **call back** or **ring back** to telephone someone again, or to telephone someone who telephoned you earlier: I’ll **call you back** as soon as I hear any news.

**Note:** **Ring back** is used in British English.

1.3 To answer someone in writing

**answer sth** I hate it when people don’t **answer my emails**.

- She **answered an advertisement in the newspaper**.

**reply** It took them a week to **reply to** my letter. I wrote many times but she never **replied**.

- They **replied that** unfortunately there were no vacancies at present.

**respond** Thousands of readers **responded to** our questionnaire.

**get back to sb** I’m sorry I didn’t **get back to you about that proposal**.

- We’ll **get back to you** early next week.

**write back** I **wrote back** and told them I was no longer interested. She **wrote back** to Sarah, giving her all the family’s news.

2. **Argue**

Those girls are always **arguing**. He **argues with me about everything**. We used to **argue over who should drive**.

To **argue** also means to discuss something with someone who has a different opinion from you: They are still **arguing over** the details of the contract. We try to teach children to **argue** their ideas calmly and rationally.

You can also say that people **have an argument**: We **had a stupid argument** and now he’s not speaking to me.

2.1 To argue with someone

**quarrel** to argue: I hate quarrelling with you.

- They’re always **quarrelling over money**.

**have a quarrel** We had the usual family **quarrel about** who should do the washing up. He’d had another **quarrel with Jamie**.

**fight** to disagree in an angry way about something: What are you two **fighting about** now? I don’t want to **fight over** such a trivial matter.

**have a fight** All teenagers **have fights with their parents**.

**row** to have a short noisy argument: My parents never **row**.

- We **rowed constantly about everything**.

**have a row** They **had a row** and he walked out.

- Our parents were always **having rows about money**.

**Note:** **Row** is used mainly in British English.

**bicker** or **squabble** to argue with someone about things that are not important: The children **bickered constantly with each other**. They have been **bickering for months over the leadership**. A group of boys were **squabbling over the ball**.

**fall out** to stop being friendly with someone because you have had a disagreement with them: **Have you two fallen out?** She’s **fallen out with her parents**.

**Note:** **Fall out** is informal and is used in British English.

3. **Ask**

I wondered where she had got the money, but didn’t like to **ask**.

- If you need help with the translation, why don’t you **ask Maria**? Don’t be afraid to **ask questions**.

‘Is something the matter?’ he **asked gently**.

**ask (sb)** **how/what/who/why** She asked me **how I knew about it**. They asked whether I had any objections.

3.1 To ask someone a question

**inquire** or **enquire** to ask someone for information about something: Why don’t you telephone the theatre and **inquire about tickets**? I am writing to **enquire whether you have any vacancies in September**.

**demand** to ask something in a very firm and angry way: ‘What do you want?’ she **demanded**.

MPs **demanded to know** the reason for the delay.

3.2 To ask someone a lot of questions to find out what they know or think

**question sb** to ask someone a lot of questions to find out what they know or what they think about something: **Interviewers questioned** 1,033 people between the 23rd and 26th of August. I wish people would **stop questioning me about** what happened.
interrogate sb to ask someone, especially a prisoner or a suspect, a lot of questions in an angry or threatening way: The suspects were interrogated for four days before being released. ♦ You have no right to interrogate me about my private life.

cross-examine sb to ask someone a lot of questions, usually in an unfriendly way: I don’t like being cross-examined about my private life!

grill sb or give sb a grilling to ask someone a lot of difficult questions over a long period of time, especially in order to make them explain their actions, decisions, or opinions: Police investigators grilled him about his movements on the day of the crime. ♦ Both party leaders were given a 30-minute grilling by a team of interviewers.

3.3 To ask for something

ask to speak or write to someone because you want them to give you something or do something for you: If you want any help, just ask. ♦ ask for sth He’s always reluctant to ask for anyone’s help.

ask sb’s permission or advice or opinion I think we’d better ask your mum’s opinion first. ♦ Always ask the permission of the landowner before camping on their land. ♦ I always ask their advice before taking any big decisions.

request sth to ask for something, or ask someone to do something, in a polite or formal way: The pilot requested permission to land. ♦ The minister has requested a meeting with the Egyptian ambassador. ♦ We specifically requested that you should be informed. ♦ Visitors are requested to register at the front desk.

seek sth to ask someone for something: Seek medical advice if symptoms last more than a week. ♦ You must first seek permission from the authors before publishing their names.

Note: Request and seek are formal, and are used mainly in official contexts.

Collocation

Nouns frequently used as the object of ask (for)
- advice, assistance, clarification, explanation, forgiveness, help, information, permission, opinion, support

Nouns frequently used as the object of request
- assistance, clarification, help, information, meeting, permission

Nouns frequently used as the object of seek
- advice, approval, assistance, clarification, help, permission

demand sth to say in a very firm way that you want something, when you feel that you have a right to expect it: I demand an apology. ♦ MPs are demanding an inquiry into the deal.

nag to keep asking someone to do something that they do not want to do: Stop nagging! ♦ My mum always nags me to tidy my room.

badger sb to ask someone to do something many times, in a way that annoys them: I wish you’d all stop badgering me with your questions?

3.4 To ask someone to do something

ask sb to do sth to say that you want someone to do something: He asked us to join him. ♦ She asked me not to tell anyone. ♦ The writer has asked not to be named.

plead to ask for something in an urgent or emotional way: ‘Please help us,’ Claire pleaded. ♦ I pleaded with you to stay, but you turned your back on me.

beg or implore sb (to do sth) to ask someone to do something in a way that shows you want it very much: I’m begging you, please help me. ♦ Don’t go, she implored. ♦ They implored us to help them. ♦ He begged her not to leave.

call for sth to say publicly that something must happen: Several of the newspapers were calling for his resignation.

appeal for sth to ask people publicly to do something, especially in a difficult situation: Both sides have appealed for calm. ♦ Police have appealed for the mother to come forward.

call on or call upon sb to do sth to officially ask a person or organization to do something in order to end a bad situation: We called upon the government to end this discrimination now. ♦ He called on the kidnappers to release all the hostages.

4. Say

See also Speak, Talk, and Tell.

Say is used for reporting what someone said. There are several verbs that mean more or less the same as say, but say is the most general word:

‘Pleased to meet you,’ he said. ♦ ‘When’s he coming back?’ He didn’t say. ♦ She said she liked dancing. ♦ Tell me what he said to you. ♦ say how/what/who/why Did she say who called? ♦ They didn’t say where they were going.

4.1 To say something

announce to say something important and sometimes surprising, usually to a group of people: ‘I’m going to America!’ she announced. ♦ Bill suddenly announced that he would be taking the day off. ♦ She announced, to my dismay, that she was coming to stay for a week.

state to say what you think or what you intend to do in a definite or formal way: I’m not making excuses, I’m simply stating a fact. ♦ The government has stated its intention to abolish child poverty. ♦ Please state clearly your reasons for wanting this job.

declare to say something in an impressive way: ‘I’m leaving tomorrow,’ James declared suddenly. ♦ Brady declared that he had no intention of giving up the fight.

mention to say something during a conversation, but without discussing it much or giving many details: He didn’t mention me, did he? ♦ I’ll mention it to Jan when I see her tomorrow. ♦ Did I mention that I’m going to be away next week?

add to say something in addition to what has been said already: ‘Don’t worry,’ Jenny added hastily. ♦ I should add that I am not happy about this decision.

utter to say something: As soon as he’d uttered the words he regretted them. ♦ They followed her without uttering a single word of protest.

Note: Utter is fairly formal and is mainly used in written English.

4.2 To make a written or spoken comment about something

say the most general way of reporting a comment that someone makes: Jane said she’d bring some food. ♦ He
4.3 To say something using particular words or a particular style

**put** to say or write something in a particular way: She put it very well when she described him as ‘brilliant but lazy’.  
**Put simply**, it was an offer we couldn’t afford to turn down.  
**I wouldn’t have put it quite like that myself**.  
**As John put it**, life would be so nice if we didn’t have to work.

**Phrases using ‘put it’ that are used to say how something is expressed:**

- **How shall I put it** or **let me put it this way** used when you are going to say something that may sound rude: **How shall I put it? He may be rich, but he certainly isn’t attractive**.  
- **Let me put it this way**, if she was my daughter I wouldn’t let her go.

- **to put it another way** used when you are going to explain something in a different way: **He was too trusting. Or, to put it another way, he had no head for business**.

- **to put it bluntly** used when you are going to be honest, even if this might upset people: **To put it bluntly, their demands are unreasonable**.

- **to put it in a nutshell** used for saying that you are going to explain something complicated in a quick and simple way: **To put it in a nutshell, we are not prepared to compromise our principles for the sake of short-term gain**.

4.4 To say something indirectly

**imply** to show your opinion about something by the things that you say, but without directly stating what you think: She stressed that her comments did not imply criticism of the study.  
**Are you implying that** he’s not up to the job?  
**suggest** to say that something is likely to exist or be true: Are you seriously suggesting that she did this on purpose?  
**I would like to suggest** an alternative explanation.

4.5 To say something again

**repeat** to say something again: Can you **repeat what you just said**?  
**He repeated that** he was not interested in buying a new car.

**reiterate** to repeat something in order to emphasize it or make it very clear to people: I would just reiterate that the entire international community is strongly united in this.  
**The minister reiterated his opposition to the plans**.

**hint** to let people know what you are thinking or feeling, but without saying it directly: She **hinted that** she would like an MP3 player for her birthday.  
**Officials are hinting at the possibility of an agreement later this week**.

5. Speak

**Speak, talk, say, and tell** are all very similar in meaning, but are used in different ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Focusing on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPEAK</td>
<td>the act or manner of speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TALK</td>
<td>having a conversation or discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAY</td>
<td>reporting what someone says</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELL</td>
<td>giving information to someone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LANGUAGE AWARENESS

These pages are designed to give up-to-date information on topics that are relevant to everyone who has any interest in the way the English language is being used at the beginning of the 21st century. They have all been written by people who are experts in the field they are writing about here; indeed, most of the authors have published more detailed work, which you might like to read if you find these pages interesting. They are intended to give you a deeper understanding of such areas as Idioms, Metaphor, and Word Formation, all of which are crucial for users of the English language. Our aim is to encourage you to think about the language, and to realize what an exciting tool it is when you can use it with confidence. There is a lot of food for thought on these pages, and teachers will find there is plenty of scope in these topics for classroom activities and discussion.

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and British English
A. UNDERSTANDING IDIOMS

by Professor Frank Boers, University of Antwerp, Belgium

IDIOMS ARE SEMI-FIXED EXPRESSIONS that are typically used in a figurative sense. For example, in the sentence ‘Exams are part of a carrot and stick method’, there are obviously no real carrots and sticks involved. The image is that of a donkey being encouraged to move forward by dangling a carrot in front of it or by hitting it with a stick. We can use this idiom to describe any event that involves more abstract rewards (the carrot) and threats (the stick).

All languages are full of idioms, and native speakers use them spontaneously without even thinking about their figurative nature. Language learners generally find idioms hard to understand, and this is not surprising. For example, learners are often not sure what image the idiom is based on. If a native speaker proposes to show you the ropes and you are not familiar with this expression, you might not immediately understand that she is proposing to teach you how to do a certain job. It would help if you knew that the expression was originally used in the context of sailing, where an experienced sailor had to show a novice how to handle the ropes on a boat.

Are idioms arbitrary?

Linguists used to believe that idioms were completely arbitrary: that is, you could not guess their meaning from the words they consist of. Consequently, teachers used to tell their students that the only way to master idioms was to learn them by heart. Fortunately, we now know that many idioms can be explained after all, and so they can be learned in systematic ways. Research tells us that when idioms are presented as non-arbitrary features of language, students find them much easier to understand and remember. In the following sections we will demonstrate the non-arbitrary nature of idioms.

Why idioms mean what they mean

Many idioms are derived from our general physical experiences (see Metaphor). For example, the expressions hot under the collar, breathe fire, and let off steam all refer to being angry, and they do this through the image of anger as something hot inside us. This makes sense to us, because when people get angry they often get red in the face as a result of rising body temperature. Similarly, the figurative expressions lend someone a hand, try your hand at something, and have your hands tied all use the image of the hand to refer to performing an action. This also makes sense, because we know from everyday experience that most activities involve the use of our hands.

Other idioms are derived from more specific areas of experience (or domains), such as sport, war, or cooking. Some of these domains may no longer be common in present-day life, but if we learn the original context in which the idiom was used and if we understand the image it is based on, we will find it is easier to understand. A helpful way of remembering idioms is to group them according to the domain that they are derived from, as follows:

Idioms derived from sailing:
- clear the decks to first finish a job completely
- a leading light a good example to follow
- be on an even keel to make calm, steady progress

Idioms derived from war:
- stick to your guns to refuse to change your opinion
- fight a losing battle to be unlikely to succeed
- be in the front line to have an important role

Idioms derived from entertainment (the theatre, the circus etc):
- behind the scenes in secret
- waiting in the wings ready to act when needed
- a balancing act a difficult compromise

Which of the three domains shown above would you associate the following idioms with?
- take something on board
- close ranks
- steer clear of someone
- be centre stage
- a last-ditch effort
- the curtain comes down

If you recognize the origin of an idiom, you will often be able to work out its meaning on your own. For instance, the idiom put something on the back burner originates from the domain of cooking, and take a back seat comes from the domain of driving. Once you recognize these connections, it will be easier to understand sentences like these:
- We put the project on the back burner.
- The students were working well together, so I decided to take a back seat.

Idioms and culture

In general, idioms that are derived from our physical experiences, such as those that associate anger with heat, show strong similarities across different cultures, and they tend to be fairly easy to understand. This is not surprising, because basic physical experiences (like being hot or cold, sick or well) are shared universally. This does not mean that these idioms can simply be translated word for word from one language to another: their precise form and wording will often differ across languages. Nevertheless, the general images are often the same.

On the other hand, idioms that are derived from more specific domains are likely to differ across cultures, even cultures that are closely related. That is because not all domains from which idioms are derived have been equally important in all cultures. For example, English is particularly rich in expressions that are derived from the domain of sailing, and this is hardly surprising when we consider England’s long history as a seafaring nation. Another area where cultures differ is in the popularity of certain games and sports. English has a lot of idioms that are derived from the following domains:

Horse racing:
- neck and neck it is hard to say who will win
- win hands down to win easily
- go off the rails to go wrong, out of control

Gambling:
- raise the ante to increase the risk
- hedge your bets to not take any risks
- pay over the odds to pay too much
Card games:
come up trumps to perform unexpectedly well
follow suit to do the same as others
not miss a trick to not fail a single time

Running contests:
jump the gun to do something too soon
have the inside track to have an advantage
quick off the mark reaching quickly

Hunting:
don’t beat about the bush be direct, get to the point
it’s open season on someone it’s a period to criticize someone
it’s in the bag success is certain

Using idioms effectively
An idiom derived from a ‘playful’ domain like games or sports is more likely to be used in informal discourse than an idiom derived from a more serious domain, such as warfare. For example, score an own goal is likely to occur more often in informal discourse than break ranks.

An idiom typically evokes a scene that is part of a larger scenario. For example, a debate between two politicians can be described as if it were a boxing match, and – because English has many idioms derived from boxing – you can choose particular phrases to highlight a specific stage or aspect of the contest. So, before the actual debate starts, the two politicians may flex their muscles to frighten the opponent; during the debate one of them may carelessly lower his guard or bravely stick his neck out and perhaps take it on the chin; if the debate gets more intense the opponents will not pull their punches; if it seems that they really want to hurt each other, you can say that the gloves are off; and after a while one of them may be on the ropes (=close to defeat) and may finally admit defeat and throw in the towel.

Idioms and sound patterns
The above paragraphs help to explain the meaning and use of idioms, but they do not explain, for example, why we say it takes two to tango rather than it takes two to waltz, nor why we say go with the flow rather than go with the stream. Part of the answer lies in sound patterns. For example, up to 20% of English idioms are made up of words that alliterate (=use the same sound at the start of each word) or of words that rhyme. This is a useful fact to know, because alliteration (in idioms such as through thick and thin, spick and span, below the belt, rule the roost, meet your match) and rhyme (in idioms such as an eager beaver, the name of the game, horses for courses, steer clear of) can help you to remember expressions like these. Sound patterns are also at work in many common non-allidomatic expressions, such as compounds (e.g. pickpocket, beer belly); collocations (e.g. tell the truth, wage war); similes (e.g. cool as a cucumber; fit as a fiddle); proverbs (e.g. curiosity killed the cat, where there’s a will there’s a way); and many other phrases (e.g. time will tell, from dawn till dusk).

Word order in idioms
As we have seen, the meanings and the lexical make-up of idioms can often be explained in systematic ways. But what about word order in idioms of the form ‘X and Y’? For example, why do we say give and take rather than ‘take and give’? Here are some of the reasons why English idioms may choose one order of words rather than another:

1. The word order may be the most ‘logical’, given the origin of the idiom. For example, in the expression swallow something hook, line, and sinker, the image is that of a fish that first swallows the bait on the hook of the fishing rod, and then swallows the line, and finally swallows even the sinker (=small heavy object that makes the line sink in the water). In short, the word order reflects the sequence of events in the literal scenario. So, recognition of the literal origin of the expression may help you to make sense of its word order. You may also want to try this with these idioms: crash and burn, cut and dried, and signed and sealed.

2. The word order may be the most ‘natural’, because a flow of information tends to move from general to specific aspects. For example, the word order alive and kicking makes more sense than kicking and alive, because kicking implies being alive. The first word creates a frame in which the second appears, as in bread and butter (you first need bread to put the butter on), chapter and verse (you first find the chapter and then the verse in that chapter), and cloak and dagger (you first only see the cloak and then – perhaps too late – the dagger).

3. The word order may sound best, because of its rhythm. English shows a preference for putting the longest word last (e.g. part and parcel, belt and braces, rack and ruin).

4. Finally, the word order may simply be the easiest to say. Compare which of the following pairs requires least movement of your tongue when you say them aloud: it’s raining cats and dogs or it’s raining dogs and cats. You can also try this with blood, sweat, and tears; home and dry; rough and tumble; and, of course, give and take.

Conclusion
It should be clear that idioms are not as arbitrary as we used to think they were. We have shown here several aspects of idiomatic language – especially their source domains and the sound patterns they make – that can help us to tackle idioms in more systematic ways. And when we recognize the systems at work in a language, it becomes easier to understand, learn, and remember things.

Further reading
Suggestions for the teaching of idioms are made in the following articles:
A collection of research papers on the teaching of idioms can be found in the following book:
Find the meaning of words you read and hear
- menus take you straight to the right meaning
- subject-specific vocabulary, World English and encyclopaedic entries
- clear definitions using the most common words

Write and speak with confidence
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