

**LECTURE 9****DICTIONARY-A WRITER'S LANGUAGE TOOL****TYPES OF DICTIONARIES**

**Unabridged dictionaries** are commonly found in libraries on dictionary stands. They comprehensively cover all words that are known at the time that they are printed. Check the date when looking for new words or slang expressions. Titles of common unabridged dictionaries are:

- Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Ref PE 1625.W36)
- Random House Dictionary (Ref PE 1625.R3)

**An abridged dictionary** has been shortened by including only the most common words or the vocabulary of a group. For example, an abridged collegiate dictionary would have words needed by the average college student. Titles of common abridged dictionaries are:

- Random House College edition (Ref PE 1625.R34)
- Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Ref PE 1628.M36)
- Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary (Ref PE 1628.S586)
- American Heritage Dictionary (Ref PE 1625.A54)

**A historical dictionary** gives the etymology or derivation of words. A word at the time of Shakespeare may now have different meanings than then. Reading historical materials require using these specialized dictionaries.

- Oxford English Dictionary (Ref PE 1625.O87)
- Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles (Ref PE 2835.C7)
- Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles (Ref PE 2835.D5)

Some dictionaries emphasize certain aspects of the language. **Slang** includes popular expressions which may not be considered proper in formal use. Some slang may have vulgar, obscene or profane connotations. In academic settings formal language usually does not include slang or non-standard forms of expression.

Usage guides will set the standards for formal writing or expression. **A thesaurus** is a dictionary that gives synonyms.

**USING A DICTIONARY**

Remember that preliminary pages (first pages) often explain abbreviations and other special features. End pages may have tables or charts. The auxiliary pages (other pages) may also have information, such as a list of colleges or cities. A separate appendix may give geographical and biographical entries. The table of contents or list of illustrations will help locate information on these preliminary or auxiliary pages.

Especially school textbooks may have a vocabulary or glossary section.

Glossary is a list of technical words or expressions used in a field of study or book. As mentioned before, appendix or auxiliary sections of books may contain a glossary section.

Dictionary order has become a synonym for alphabetical order.

### **KINDS OF INFORMATION**

Elementary students often are tested on their ability to use dictionaries. Team games can be used to develop skill with:

- alphabetical order
- guide words
- pronunciation
- syllabication
- derivation
- etymology
- synonyms
- antonyms

Guide words are placed at the top of a page to help the user find the correct page alphabetically.

Pronunciation involves using various symbols to represent sounds. News broadcasting organizations may have developed their own dictionaries for names of people and places.

Syllabication shows how the word is divided when the word is separated at the end of a line of print.

Derivation traces what root words are used to form the word. Understanding from which language the word comes helps explain differences in phonetic rules.

"Goethe" may not seem to be pronounced the way it was spelled except to those who understand the German language. Our English language is a result of the many cultures from which it is drawn.

Etymology is the study of the word's history including both derivation and how the word's usage has changed.

Usage reflects how different areas use words in unique ways.

Meaning or definition is explained or shown through examples. Synonyms (words with the same meaning) and antonyms (words with the opposite meaning) also contribute to an accurate definition.

Illustrative quotations, such as those from Shakespeare give insight into meaning and derivation.

Maps and plates of illustration give pictures to provide reference points. For example, maps can show where Guam is located in relation to other islands.

Geographical facts and history also give the significance of places. Guam was the site of a major battle in World War II.

Biographical facts are needed because many words have origins in personal names. A "curie" is one word that is associated with the scientists who discovered it. A dictionary that contains geographical and biographical information is called an encyclopedic dictionary.

Some dictionaries may have a separate section with geographical and biographical information.

**PURCHASING A DICTIONARY**

Check if your dictionary at minimum offers:

1. Publication date
2. Full definition and examples
3. Pronunciations (more than one)
4. Word class
5. Label (register)

**HISTORY AND VALUE**

William Caxton (c1483) produced a French-English dictionary. Travellers needed a bilingual dictionary when visiting countries with a different language than their own. Ancient writings were not useful until they could be translated.

The discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799 helped unlock many ancient languages. The stone was written in Greek and two forms of Egyptian.

In 1822 the messages were finally deciphered.

In 1755, Samuel Johnson produced the earliest English language dictionary. A facsimile reprint of this dictionary is available here at the McKay Library in the Reference collection. (Ref PE 1620.J6 1979) As a facsimile reprint, letters appear as they were written in 1755. Alternate spellings are given without preference. Some word derivation is shown.

Noah Webster printed the first modern dictionary in 1828 which set the standard for spelling and pronunciation.

His dictionaries also distinguished American word usage from usage common in England.

Sir James Murray gathered historical background on words.

The Oxford English Dictionary traces the origin of words and their usage through time with examples. While the British usage is emphasized, recent editions include English usage in other parts of the world. This dictionary is now available as an Internet subscription under

**SUMMARY**

Dictionaries are important reference tools for writers to use. Different kinds of dictionaries are available for various needs.