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# Concise Oxford English Dictionary

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ELEVENTH EDITION

*Edited by*  
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# Preface

## to the Eleventh Edition

The eleventh edition of the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* has been fully revised, updated, and redesigned, as is appropriate for the first *Concise* of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In producing this edition we have been able to draw on the language research and analysis carried out for the groundbreaking *Oxford Dictionary of English* (second edition), which was published in 2003. As with the very first edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, which made use of the ‘materials’ and ‘methods’ by which the editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* had ‘revolutionized lexicography’, so the eleventh edition makes use of the innovative principles and methodology devised for its larger cousin.

The first edition of the *Concise* was edited by the brothers Henry Watson and Frank George Fowler. Proposed in 1906, it was published in June 1911, whereupon it was praised as ‘a marvel of condensation, accomplished by skilful hands’ and ‘a miracle of condensed scholarship’. Revolutionary in its concentration on current English and in its copious use of illustrative examples ‘as a necessary supplement to definition’, the dictionary was an immediate success. Its compilation was indeed an Olympian achievement: the brothers were able to draw on the the *Oxford English Dictionary*, then still incomplete, for only the A–R part of the alphabet.

It is interesting today to look back at that first edition of the *Concise* and compare it with the new edition. The cover, bedecked with art nouveau swirls, proclaims ‘The Concise Oxford Dictionary, adapted by H. W. and F. G. Fowler from The Oxford Dictionary’. The book contains 1,064 pages, whereas the new edition has 1,681 larger pages.

The words covered, and the way they are described, have of course changed along with the language and the world. *COD1* had no entry for **computer**, **radio**, **television**, or **cinema**, although it did have **cockyolly bird** (‘nursery phr. for a bird’) and **impaludism** (‘morbid state ... found in dwellers in marshes’). It defined **beverage** as ‘drinking-liquor’, **cancan** as ‘indecent dance’, and **neon** as ‘lately discovered atmospheric gas’. **Gay** meant ‘full of or disposed to or indicating mirth; light-hearted, sportive’, while **Lesbian** was simply ‘of Lesbos’. Even spelling is different: **horsebox**, **horse chestnut**, and **horsefly** were all hyphenated, and **rime** and **shew** were given as variant spellings of **rhyme** and **show**.

The Fowler brothers, like all lexicographers until quite recently, had to rely largely on examples of usage that were derived from their own reading or sent in by others. Modern dictionaries are written and revised with the help

of searchable databases containing millions of words of English. For the eleventh edition we have made use of larger amounts of evidence than ever before: we were able to call upon the hundreds of millions of words of the Oxford English Corpus, which includes the citations database of the Oxford Reading Programme. This evidence informs everything we are able to say about the language and the words within it, whether in giving information about spelling, in ensuring accurate and precise definitions, or in establishing currency or level of formality. This latest edition of the *Concise* offers a description of the language that is as accurate, up to date, and objective as possible, using resources that the editors of the first edition could only dream of.

We have made particular efforts to ensure that the eleventh edition covers all those words, phrases, and meanings that form the central vocabulary of English in the modern world. Special attention has been given to scientific and technical vocabulary: we have consulted experts in fast-moving fields such as genetics, pharmacology, and computing. Rare, archaic, and literary language is represented as fully as ever before, and the latest *Concise* continues to celebrate all the richness and history of English.

The dictionary definitions retain the hallmark of conciseness, although this is balanced by an emphasis on clarity and accessibility, using ordinary modern English to explain technical and complex terms, with no abbreviations. With a nod to that first edition, we have added a thousand more illustrative examples to the text.

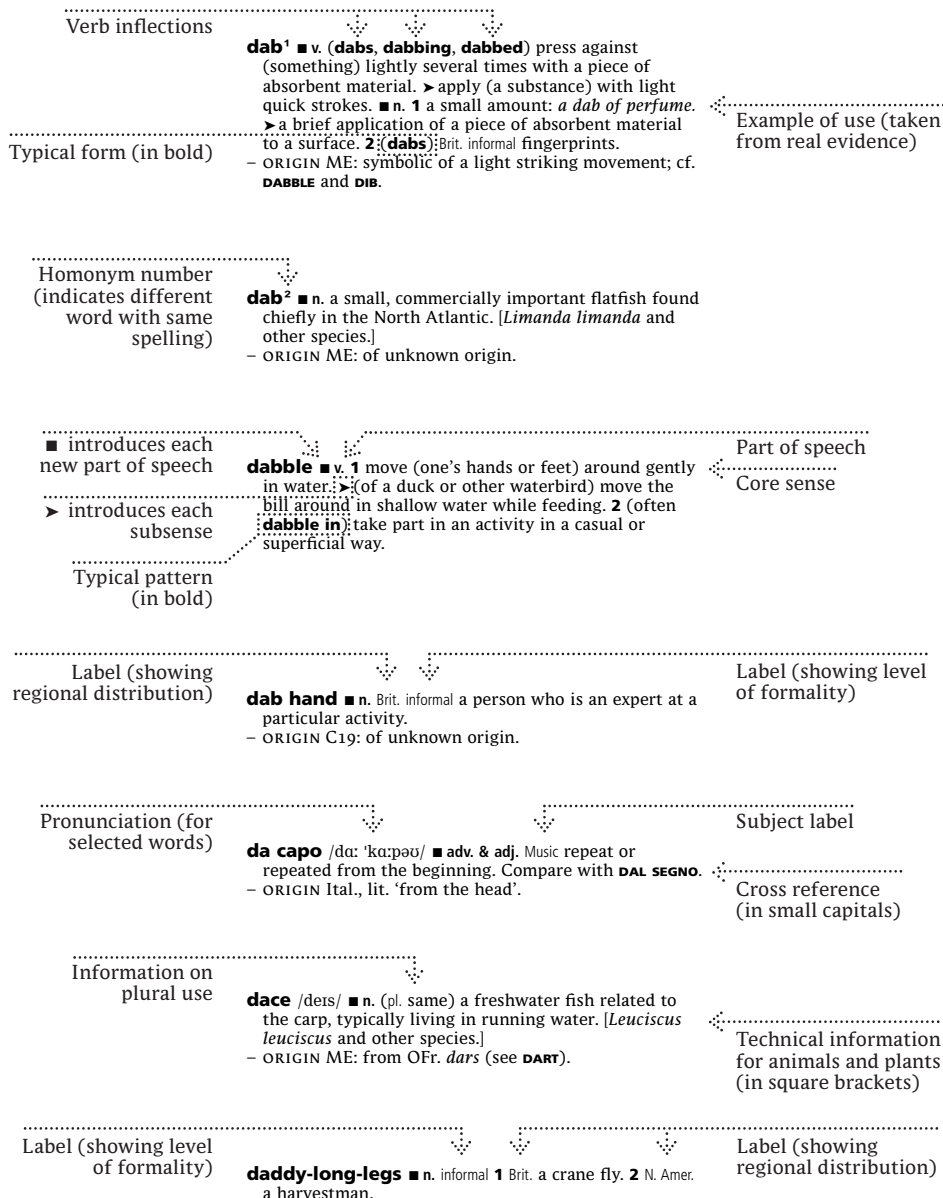
Features new to this edition include a greatly increased number of boxed usage notes, offering help with tricky and controversial questions of English. There are also around a hundred special Word Histories, which trace the stories of some of the language's most interesting words.

Appendices include useful tables of factual information, a discussion of English used in electronic communication, an explanation of the different levels of English, and a guide to good English.

We are grateful to many people for their help in the preparation of this edition. We are particularly indebted to Michael Proffitt, Graeme Diamond, and the continuing work of the New Words team of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, for their help in identifying and drafting new words as they come into the language.

CATHERINE SOANES  
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# Guide to the use of the dictionary



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| Variant pronunciations                 | <b>daikon</b> /ˈdaɪk(ə)n, -kɒn/ ■ n. another term for <b>MOOLI</b> .<br>– ORIGIN Japanese, from <i>dai</i> ‘large’ + <i>kon</i> ‘root’.   | Cross-reference entry<br>(cross reference in small capitals) |
|  | <b>daimyo</b> /ˈdaɪmɪəʊ, ˈdaɪmjəʊ/ (also <b>daimio</b> ) ■ n. (pl. <b>daimyos</b> ) (in feudal Japan) one of the great lords who were vassals of the shogun.<br>– ORIGIN Japanese, from <i>dai</i> ‘great’ + <i>myō</i> ‘name’.   | Variant spelling   |
| Plural form                            | <b>daisy</b> ■ n. (pl. <b>daisies</b> ) a small grassland plant with composite flowers having a yellow disc and white rays. [ <i>Bellis perennis</i> .] ► used in names of other plants of the same family, e.g. <b>Michaelmas daisy</b> .  |  |
| Phrases and idioms                     | – PHRASES <b>pushing up (the) daisies</b> informal dead and buried.<br>– ORIGIN OE <i>dæges ēage</i> ‘day’s eye’ (because the flower opens in the morning and closes at night).   | Word origin  |
|  | <b>damp</b> ■ adj. slightly wet. ■ n. <b>1</b> moisture in the air, on a surface, or in a solid, typically with detrimental or unpleasant effects. ► ( <b>damps</b> ) archaic damp air or atmosphere. <b>2</b> archaic a check or discouragement. ■ v. <b>1</b> make damp. <b>2</b> (often <b>damp something down</b> ) make (a fire) burn less strongly by reducing its air supply. ► control or restrain (a feeling or a situation). <b>3</b> reduce or stop the vibration of (the strings of a musical instrument). ► Physics progressively reduce the amplitude of (an oscillation or vibration). |  |
| Label (showing currency)               | – DERIVATIVES <b>dampish</b> adj. <b>damply</b> adv. <b>dampness</b> n.<br>– ORIGIN ME (in the sense ‘noxious inhalation’): of W. Gmc origin.   | Subject label  |
| Derivatives<br>(in alphabetical order) |   |  |
|  | <b>darts</b> ■ pl. n. [usu. treated as sing.] an indoor game in which darts are thrown at a dartboard to score points.  | Grammatical information<br>(in square brackets)              |