

Using a Dictionary

A dictionary is our major source of information about words. It shows us how to spell a word, or how to pronounce it, or what it means. But for this, we need to know how to use a dictionary.

The words that a dictionary contains are called **entries**. All the entries are arranged in alphabetical order: a, b, c, d etc. according to their first letter, e.g. achieve, bend, click, doubt, etc.

If words begin with the same first letter; they are arranged according to their second letter, e.g. baby, beak, bitter, borrow, bride, etc. and then according to the third letter, the next letter and so on.

For example, look at the following words. All the words begin with the letter 'b'. However, they differ in their second, third, or the next letters. And thus, in a dictionary they will appear in the following order depending on their first, second, third or the next letter.

baby, back, bad, behind, below, bind, block, blood, etc.

Activity 1: Locating a word

Can you put these entries in the correct order in which they would appear in a dictionary?

- |           |         |            |         |             |         |
|-----------|---------|------------|---------|-------------|---------|
| 1. class  | teacher | book       | student | examination | answer  |
| 2. parent | child   | principal  | office  | play        | read    |
| 3. look   | learn   | literature | lamp    | leader      | listen  |
| 4. feel   | fight   | fact       | fiction | flower      | failure |
| 5. lesson | large   | manage     | naughty | scold       | knock   |

Increasing Your Vocabulary

Presentation 1:

Notice all the kinds of information about a word given in a dictionary.

**1. Entry** eclipse

**2. Pronunciation** /ɪˈkliːps/ noun, verb

**3. Parts of speech** noun, verb

**4. Definitions**

- noun 1 [C] an occasion when the moon passes between the earth and the sun so that you cannot see all or part of the sun for a time; an occasion when the earth passes between the moon and the sun so that you cannot see all or part of the moon for a time: *an eclipse of the sun/moon*
- a total/partial eclipse 2 [sing., U] a loss of importance, power, etc. especially because sb/sth else has become more important, powerful, etc.: *The election result marked the eclipse of the right wing.* / *Her work was in eclipse for most of the 20th century.*
- verb [VN] 1 [often passive] (of the moon, the earth, etc.) to cause an eclipse 2 to make sb/sth seem dull or unimportant by comparison **SYN** OUTSHINE, OVERSHADOW.

**5. Sample sentence** Her work was in eclipse for most of the 20th century.

**6. Synonym** OUTSHINE, OVERSHADOW.

Presentation 2:

- can-non** /ˈkænən/ noun, verb
- noun** (pl. **can-nons** or **can-nons**) 1 an old type of large heavy gun, usually on wheels, that fires solid metal or stone balls → see also LOOSE CANNON, WATER CANNON
- 2 an automatic gun that is fired from an aircraft
- verb** [I] + **adv./prep.** to hit sb/sth with a lot of force while you are moving: *He ran around the corner, cannoning into a group of kids.*
- can-non-ade** /ˈkænənˈeɪd/ noun a continuous firing of large guns
- can-non-ball** /ˈkænənˌbɔːl/ noun a large metal or stone ball that is fired from a CANNON
- cannon fodder** noun [U] soldiers who are thought of not as people whose lives are important, but as material to be used up in war
- can-not** 0-ɪ /ˈkænət/; **NAmE** -nɑːt/ = CAN NOT: *I cannot believe the price of the tickets!*
- can-nu-la** /ˈkænjələ/ noun (pl. **can-nulae** /-liː/ or **can-nulas**) (medical) a thin tube that is put into a VEIN or other part of the body, for example to give sb medicine
- canny** /ˈkæni/ adj. intelligent, careful and showing good judgement, especially in business or politics: *a canny politician* → *a canny move* → **can-nily** adv.
- cano-e** /kəˈnuː/ noun, verb
- noun** a light narrow boat which you move along in the water with a PADDLE → see also KAYAK
- verb** (ca-noe-ing, ca-noed, ca-noed) [I] (often **go cano-ing**) to travel in a canoe
- ca-noe-ing** /kəˈnuːɪŋ/ noun [U] the sport of travelling in or racing a CANOE: *to go canoeing*
- ca-noe-ist** /kəˈnuːɪst/ noun a person travelling in a canoe
- can-ola** /kəˈnɔːlə/; **NAmE** -nɒʊ-/ noun [U] a type of cooking oil made from a variety of RAPESEED that was developed in Canada and is grown widely in N America. The plant is also referred to as **canola**.

Presentation 3: A Dictionary Entry

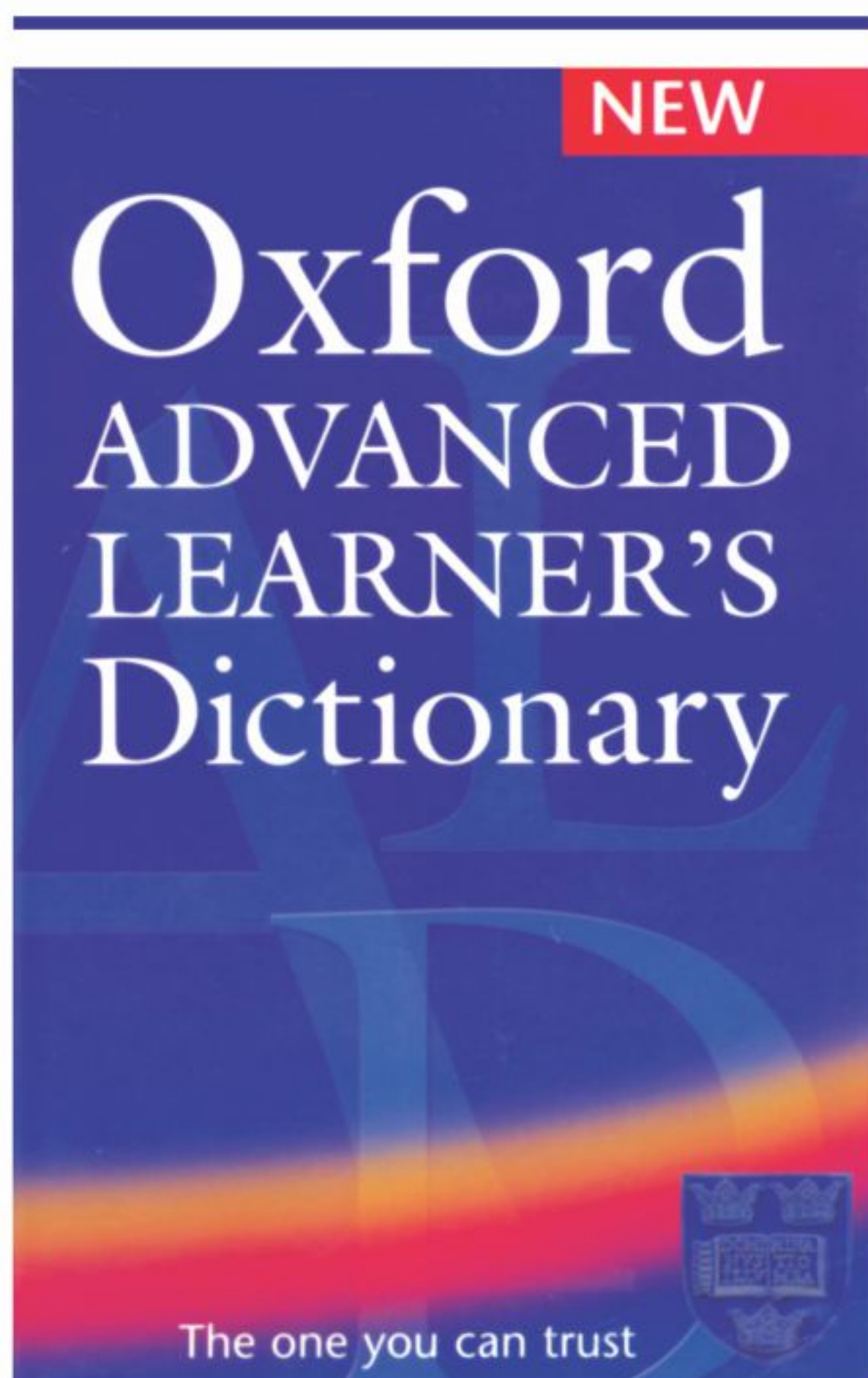
**act** 0-ɪ /ækt/ noun, verb

**noun**

- STH THAT SB DOES 1 0-ɪ [C] a particular thing that sb does: *a criminal act* → *of sth an act of kindness* → *acts of terrorism* → *of sb The murder was the act of a psychopath.*
- SYNONYMS** AT ACTION
- LAW** 2 0-ɪ [C] a law that has been passed by a parliament: *an Act of Congress* → *the Banking Act 2009*
- PRETENDING** 3 0-ɪ [sing.] a way of behaving that is not sincere but is intended to have a particular effect on others: *Don't take her seriously—it's all an act.* → *You could tell she was just putting on an act.*
- IN PLAY/ENTERTAINMENT** 4 [C] one of the main divisions of a play, an OPERA, etc.: *a play in five acts* → *The hero dies in Act 5, Scene 3.* 5 [C] one of several short pieces of entertainment in a show: *a circus/comedy/magic act* 6 [C] a performer or group of musicians: *They were one of rock's most impressive live acts.*
- IDM** **act of God** (law) an event caused by natural forces beyond human control, such as a storm, a flood or an EARTHQUAKE **be/get in on the act** (informal) to be/become involved in an activity that sb else has started, especially to get sth for yourself **do, perform, stage a disappearing/vanishing act** (informal) to go away or be impossible to find when people need or want you **get your act together** (informal) to organize yourself and your activities in a more effective way in order to achieve sth: *He needs to get his act together if he's going to pass.* **a hard/tough act to follow** a person who is so good or successful at sth that it will be difficult for anyone else coming after them to be as good or successful **in the act (of doing sth)** while you are doing sth: *He was caught in the act of stealing a car.* → more at CLEAN V., READ V.

**verb**

- DO** STH 1 0-ɪ [I] to do sth for a particular purpose or in order to deal with a situation: *It is vital that we act to stop the destruction of the rainforests.* → *The girl's life was saved because the doctors acted so promptly.* → *He claims he acted in self-defence.*
- BEHAVE** 2 0-ɪ [I] to behave in a particular way: + **adv.** *John's been acting very strangely lately.* → **like sb/sth** *Stop acting like spoilt children!* → **as if/though...** *She was acting as if she'd seen a ghost.* **HELP** In spoken English people often use **like** instead of **as if** or **as though** in this meaning, especially in **NAmE**: *She was acting like she'd seen a ghost.* This is not considered correct in written **BrE**.
- PRETEND** 3 0-ɪ [I] to pretend by your behaviour to be a particular type of person: + **noun** *He's been acting the devoted husband all day.* → + **adj.** *I decided to act dumb.*
- PERFORM IN PLAY/MOVIE** 4 0-ɪ [I, T] to perform a part in a play or film/movie: *Have you ever acted?* → *Most of the cast act well.* → **sth** *Who's acting (the part of) Hamlet?* → *The play was well acted.*
- PERFORM FUNCTION** 5 [I] to perform a particular role or function: **as sth** *Can you act as interpreter?* → **like sth** *hormones in the brain that act like natural painkillers*
- HAVE EFFECT** 6 [I] **(on sth)** to have an effect on sth: *Alcohol acts quickly on the brain.* **IDM** see AGE n., FOOL n., OWN v.



Presentation 4: Common Prefixed

Sometimes new words are formed by attaching prefixes or suffixes to root words.

For example: *semicircle*.

The chart below shows some common prefixes, their meanings and some sample words.

Number	Prefix	Sample words
half	semi-	semicircle
one	uni-	uniform
two	bi-	bilingual
three	tri-	triangle
four	quad-	quadrangular
five	pent-	pentameter
eight	oct-	octopus
ten	dec-	decimal

Activity 2:

Look at the dictionary page in Presentation 2. Try to answer the following questions.

1. What is the definition 2 of canon?
2. Find two entry words that are pronounced the same way but have different spellings and meanings.
3. What is the meaning of the word canny?
4. What part of speech is canny?

Activity 4:

Use the prefixes of the words in bold to help answer the following questions.

1. Birds are called bipeds because they have two feet. Why are dogs called quadrupeds?
2. If a woman gave birth to triplets, how many children did she give birth to?
3. Is an octogenarian forty, eighty, or a hundred years old?
4. 'Cycle' means 'wheel'. Why are tricycles, bicycles, and unicycles so named?

Activity 5:

The base word in the first sentence of each group of sentences below is given in bold. Add a prefix or a suffix to each base word to make a new word that fits the meaning of the second sentence.

- Example:**
- A: You don't seem to like to go to any fairs or festivals. That's right. I **dislike** going to crowded places.
- B: Can I **depend** on Shamim with this task? Yes, he's a very **dependable** person.
1. Raj **fold**s, the paper and gives it to Shahana. When Shahana \_\_\_\_\_ the paper, she finds a red rose in it.
  2. Do you know what 'guess' means? You can find the \_\_\_\_\_ in a dictionary.
  3. How do you **pronounce** 'guess'? You can also find the \_\_\_\_\_ in the dictionary.
  4. Some of the sentences in the story are not correct. First, identify the \_\_\_\_\_ sentences and then, rewrite them.

Activity 3:

Most words have more than one meaning. A good dictionary will give all the chief meanings of the words it contains. Look at the dictionary page with the entry act. Find the particular meaning of act in each of the following sentences. Mention the part of speech and then write only the number of the appropriate meaning against each sentence.

**Example:** The heroine dies in the third **act** of the play. *noun, definition 4*

- a. It was an **act** of not just kindness but also of love.
- b. Have you ever **acted** in a play?
- c. Don't try to **act** so smart. We know exactly what you can do.
- d. Can you please **act** as the umpire of today's match?
- e. The government is planning to pass a new Environment **Act**.
- f. The government should **act** immediately to solve the problem of traffic jam in Dhaka City.

Activity 6: Dictionary Quiz

Look up the words in bold in a dictionary and answer the questions as quickly as you can.

1. **General meaning** What does **pastoral** mean? What does a **plumber** do? When is **anesthesia** needed?
2. **Synonym/Antonym** Find a meaning similar to **generous**. Find a word similar to **allow**. What's the opposite of **sharp**?
3. **Grammar** Is the word **deadly** a noun, a verb, an adverb, or an adjective?

What's the past tense of **blow**? Is the word **advice** countable or uncountable?

4. **Spelling** How do you spell the plural of **body**?
5. **Pronunciation** Which syllable is stressed in the word **engineer**?
6. **Information** What do you call a person who comes from the Netherlands? How large is an **acre**?



Material planned and prepared by PROFESSOR SHAHEEN KABIR



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