

PART 8

Effective Words

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Using Appropriate Language

Appropriate language suits your writing situation—your subject, purpose, and audience. Like everyone, you vary your words depending on the context in which you are speaking and writing. Look, for example, at the underlined words in these two sentences:

Some patients decide to bag counseling because their shrinks seem strung out.

Some patients decide to abandon counseling because their therapists seem disturbed.

The first sentence might be addressed to friends in casual conversation. The second is more suitable for an academic audience.

The more formal language of the second example is typical of **standard American English**. This is the dialect of English normally expected and used in school, business, government, the professions, and the communications media. (For more on its role in academic writing, see pp. 132–33.)

The vocabulary of standard American English is huge, allowing expression of an infinite range of ideas and feelings; but it does exclude words that only some groups of people use, understand, or find inoffensive. Some of those more limited vocabularies should be avoided altogether; others should be used cautiously and in special situations, as when aiming for a special effect with an audience you know will appreciate it. Whenever you doubt a word's status, consult a dictionary (see p. 536).

Note Many grammar and style checkers can be set to flag potentially inappropriate words (see p. 61), such as nonstandard dialect, slang, colloquialisms, and gender-specific terms (*manmade*, *mailman*). However, the checker can flag only words listed in its dictionary of questionable words. For example, a checker flagged *business-man* as potentially sexist in *A successful businessman puts clients first*, but the checker did not flag *his* in *A successful businessperson listens to his clients*. If you use a checker to review your language, you'll need to determine whether a flagged word is or is not appropriate for your writing situation.

37a Revising nonstandard dialect

Like many countries, the United States consists of scores of regional, social, and ethnic groups with their own distinct dialects, or versions of English. Standard American English is one of these dialects, and so are Black English, Appalachian English, Creole, and the English of coastal Maine. All the dialects of English share many features, but each also has its own vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

If you speak a dialect of English besides standard American English, be careful about using your dialect in situations where standard English is the norm, such as in academic or public writing. Dialects are not wrong in themselves, but forms imported from one dialect into another may still be perceived as unclear or incorrect. When you know standard English is expected in your writing, edit to eliminate expressions in your dialect that you know (or have been told) differ from standard English. These expressions may include *theirselves*, *hisn*, *them books*, and others labeled “non-standard” by a dictionary. They may also include verb forms, as discussed on pages 278–92. For help identifying and editing nonstandard language, see “Guide” inside the back cover of this book.

Your participation in the community of standard English does not require you to abandon your own dialect. You may want to use it in writing you do for yourself, such as journals, notes, and drafts, which should be composed as freely as possible. You may want to quote it in an academic paper, as when analyzing or reporting conversation in dialect. And, of course, you will want to use it with others who speak it.

37b Using regionalisms only when appropriate

Regionalisms are expressions or pronunciations peculiar to a particular area. Southerners may say they *reckon*, meaning “think” or “suppose.” People in Maine invite their Boston friends to come *down* rather than *up* (north) to visit. New Yorkers stand *on* rather than *in* line for a movie.

Regional expressions are appropriate in writing addressed to local readers and may lend realism to regional description, but they should be avoided in writing intended for a general audience.

37c Using slang only when appropriate

All groups of people—from musicians and computer scientists to vegetarians and golfers—create novel and colorful expressions called **slang**. The following quotation, for instance, is from an essay on the slang of “skaters” (skateboarders):

Curtis slashed ultra-punk crunchers on his longboard, while the Rube-man flailed his usual Gumbyness on tweaked frontides and lofty fakie ollies.—Miles Orkin, “Mucho Slingage by the Pool”

Among those who understand it, slang may be vivid and forceful. It often occurs in dialog, and an occasional slang expression can enliven an informal essay. Some slang, such as *dropout* (*She was a high school dropout*), has proved so useful that it has passed into the general vocabulary.

But most slang is too flippant and imprecise for effective communication, and it is generally inappropriate for college or business writing. Notice the gain in seriousness and precision achieved in the following revision:

Slang Many students start out pretty together but then get weird.
Revised Many students start out with clear goals but then lose their direction.

37d Using colloquial language only when appropriate

Colloquial language designates the words and expressions appropriate to everyday spoken language. Regardless of our backgrounds and how we live, we all try to *get along with* each other. We play with *kids*, *go crazy* for something, and in our worst moments try to *get back at* someone who has made us do the *dirty work*.

When you write informally, colloquial language may be appropriate to achieve the casual, relaxed effect of conversation. An occasional colloquial word dropped into otherwise more formal writing can also help you achieve a desired emphasis. But colloquial language does not provide the exactness needed in more formal college, public, and professional writing. In such writing you should generally avoid any words and expressions labeled “informal” or “colloquial” in your dictionary. Take special care to avoid **mixed diction**, a combination of standard and colloquial words:

Mixed diction According to a Native American myth, the Great Creator had a dog hanging around with him when he created the earth.
Revised According to a Native American myth, the Great Creator was accompanied by a dog when he created the earth.

37e Revising neologisms

Neologisms are words created (or coined) so recently that they have not come into established use. An example is *prequel* (made up of *pre-*, meaning “before,” and the ending of *sequel*), a movie or book that takes the story of an existing movie or book back in time. Some neologisms do become accepted as part of our general vocabulary—*motel*, coined from *motor* and *hotel*, is an example. But most neologisms pass quickly from the language. Unless such words serve a special purpose in your writing and are sure to be understood by your readers, you should avoid them.

37f Using technical words with care

All disciplines and professions rely on special words or give common words special meanings. Chemists speak of *esters* and *phosphatides*, geographers and mapmakers refer to *isobars* and *isotherms*, and literary critics write about *motifs* and *subtexts*. Such technical language allows specialists to communicate precisely and economically with other specialists who share their vocabulary. But without explanation these words are meaningless to nonspecialists. When you are

writing for nonspecialists, avoid unnecessary technical terms and carefully define terms you must use.

37g Revising indirect or pretentious writing

In most writing, small, plain, and direct words are preferable to big, showy, or evasive words. Avoid euphemisms, double talk, and pretentious writing.

A **euphemism** is a presumably inoffensive word that a writer or speaker substitutes for a word deemed potentially offensive or too blunt, such as *passed away* for “died.” Euphemisms appear whenever a writer or speaker wants to bury the truth, as when a governor mentions the *negative growth* (meaning “decline”) in her state. Use euphemisms only when you know that blunt, truthful words would needlessly hurt or offend members of your audience.

A kind of euphemism that deliberately evades the truth is **double talk** (also called **doublespeak** or **weasel words**): language intended to confuse or to be misunderstood. Today double talk is unfortunately common in politics and advertising—the *revenue enhancement* that is really a tax, the *biodegradable* bags that last decades. Double talk has no place in honest writing.

Euphemism and sometimes double talk seem to keep company with fancy writing. Any writing that is more elaborate than its subject requires will sound **pretentious**—that is, excessively showy. Choose your words for their exactness and economy. The big, ornate word may be tempting, but pass it up. Your readers will be grateful.

Pretentious To perpetuate our endeavor of providing funds for our elderly citizens as we do at the present moment, we will face the exigency of enhanced contributions from all our citizens.

Revised We cannot continue to fund Social Security and Medi-care for the elderly unless we raise taxes.

37h Revising sexist and other biased language

Even when we do not mean it to, our language can reflect and perpetuate hurtful prejudices toward groups of people, especially racial, ethnic, religious, age, and sexual groups. Such biased language can be obvious—words such as *nigger*, *whitey*, *mick*, *kike*, *fag*, *dyke*, and *broad*. But it can also be subtle, generalizing about groups in ways that may be familiar but that are also inaccurate or unfair. For instance, people with physical disabilities are as varied a group as any other: the only thing they have in common is some form of impairment. To assume that people with disabilities share certain attitudes (shyness, helplessness, victimization, whatever) is to disregard the uniqueness of each person.

Biased language reflects poorly on the user, not on the person or persons whom it mischaracterizes or insults. Unbiased language does not submit to false generalizations. It treats people as individuals and labels groups as they wish to be labeled.

1 Avoiding stereotypes of race, ethnicity, religion, age, and other characteristics

A **stereotype** is a generalization based on poor evidence, a kind of formula for understanding and judging people simply because of their membership in a group:

Men are uncommunicative.

Women are emotional.

Liberals want to raise taxes.

Conservatives are affluent.

At best, stereotypes betray an uncritical writer, one who is not thinking beyond notions received from others. Worse, they betray a writer who does not mind hurting others or even *wants* to hurt others.

In your writing, be alert for any general statements about people based on only one or a few characteristics. Be especially cautious about substituting such statements for the evidence you should be providing instead.

Stereotype Elderly drivers should have their licenses limited to daytime driving. [Implies that all elderly people are poor night drivers.]

Revised Drivers with impaired night vision should have their licenses limited to daytime driving.

Some stereotypes have become part of the language, but they are still potentially offensive.

Stereotype The administrators are too blind to see the need for a new gymnasium.

Revised The administrators do not understand the need for a new gymnasium.

Among the most subtle and persistent biased language is that expressing narrow ideas about men's and women's roles, position, and value in society. This **sexist language** distinguishes needlessly between men and women in such matters as occupation, ability, behavior, temperament, and maturity. Like other stereotypes, it can wound or irritate readers, and it indicates the writer's thoughtlessness or unfairness. The following box suggests some ways of eliminating sexist language.

Forms of address vary widely from culture to culture. In some cultures, for instance, one shows respect by referring to all older women as if they were married, using the equivalent of the title *Mrs.* Usage in the United States is changing toward making no assumptions about marital status, rank, or other characteristics—for instance, using the title *Ms.* for a woman unless she is known to prefer *Mrs.* or *Miss.*

3 Using appropriate labels

We often need to label groups: *swimmers, politicians, mothers, Christians, westerners, students.* But labels can be shorthand stereotypes that slight the person labeled and ignore the preferences of the group members themselves. Showing sensitivity when applying labels reveals you to be alert to readers' needs and concerns. Although sometimes dismissed as "political correctness," such sensitivity hurts no one and helps gain your readers' trust and respect.

- ▼ **Avoid labels that (intentionally or not) disparage the person or group you refer to.** A person with emotional problems is not a *mental patient*. A person with cancer is not a *cancer victim*. A person using a wheelchair is not *wheelchair-bound*.
- ▼ **Use names for racial, ethnic, and other groups that reflect the preferences of each group's members,** or at least many of them. Examples of current preferences include *African American* or *black, latino/latina* (for Americans and American immigrants of Spanish-speaking descent), and *people with disabilities* (rather than *the handicapped*). But labels change often. To learn how a group's members wish to be labeled, ask them directly, attend to usage in reputable periodicals, or check a recent dictionary.

A helpful reference for appropriate labels is *Guidelines for Bias-Free Writing*, by Marilyn Schwartz and the Task Force on Bias-Free Language of the Association of American University Presses.

EXERCISE 37.1 Revising: Appropriate words

Rewrite the following sentences as needed for standard American English. Consult a dictionary to determine whether particular words are appropriate and to find suitable substitutes. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Example:

If negotiators get hyper during contract discussions, they may mess up chances for a settlement.

If negotiators become excited or upset during contract discussions, they may harm chances for a settlement.

1. Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a major deal all over the world.
2. The disease gets around primarily by sexual intercourse, ex-change of bodily fluids, shared needles, and blood transfusions.
3. Those who think the disease is limited to homos, druggies, and foreigners are quite mistaken.
4. Stats suggest that in the United States one in every five hundred college kids carries the virus.
5. A person with AIDS does not deserve to be subjected to exclusionary behavior or callousness on the part of his fellow citizens. Instead, he has the necessity for all the compassion, medical care, and financial assistance due those who are in the extremity of illness.
6. An AIDS victim often sees a team of doctors or a single doctor with a specialized practice.
7. The doctor may help his patients by obtaining social services for them as well as by providing medical care.
8. The AIDS sufferer who loses his job may need public assistance.
9. For someone who is very ill, a full-time nurse may be necessary. She can administer medications and make the sick person as comfortable as possible.
10. Some people with AIDS have insurance, but others lack the bread for premiums.

<http://www.ablongman.com/littlebrown>

Visit the companion Web site for more help and additional exercises on appropriate language.

Language in academic and public writing

Always appropriate

Standard American English

Sometimes appropriate

Regional words and expressions	Neologisms
Slang	Technical language
Colloquial language	Euphemisms

Rarely or never appropriate

Nonstandard dialect	Biased language: sexist, racist,
Double talk	ethnocentric, etc.

Eliminating sexist language

- ▼ **Avoid demeaning and patronizing language**—for instance, identifying women and men differently or trivializing either gender:

Sexist Dr. Keith Kim and Lydia Hawkins wrote the article.
 Revised Dr. Keith Kim and Dr. Lydia Hawkins wrote the article.
 Revised Keith Kim and Lydia Hawkins wrote the article.

Sexist Ladies are entering formerly male occupations.
 Revised Women are entering formerly male occupations.

- ▼ **Avoid occupational or social stereotypes**, assuming that a role or profession is exclusively male or female:

Sexist The considerate doctor commends a nurse when she provides his patients with good care.
 Revised The considerate doctor commends a nurse who provides good care for patients.

- ▼ **Avoid referring needlessly to gender:**

Sexist Marie Curie, a woman chemist, discovered radium.
 Revised Marie Curie, a chemist, discovered radium.

Sexist The patients were tended by a male nurse.
 Revised The patients were tended by a nurse.

- ▼ **Avoid using *man* or words containing *man* to refer to all human beings.** Here are a few alternatives:

businessman	businessperson
chairman	chair, chairperson
congressman	representative in Congress, legislator
craftsman	craftsperson, artisan
layman	layperson
mankind	humankind, humanity, human beings, people
policeman	police officer
salesman	salesperson, sales representative

Sexist Man has not reached the limits of social justice.
 Revised Humankind [or Humanity] has not reached the limits of so-cial justice.

Sexist The furniture consists of manmade materials.
 Revised The furniture consists of synthetic materials.

- ▼ **Avoid the generic *he***, the male pronoun used to refer to both genders. (See also pp. 315–16.)

Sexist The newborn child explores his world.
 Revised Newborn children explore their world. [Use the plural for the pronoun and the word it refers to.]

Revised The newborn child explores the world. [Avoid the pronoun altogether.]

Revised The newborn child explores his or her world. [Substitute male and female pronouns.]

Use the last option sparingly—only once in a group of sentences and only to stress the singular individual.

CHAPTER 38

Using Exact Language

To write clearly and effectively, you will want to find the words that fit your meaning exactly and convey your attitude precisely. Don't worry too much about choosing exact words while you are drafting an essay. If the right word doesn't come to you, leave a blank. Revision (p. 48) or editing (p. 58) is the stage to consider tone, specificity, and precision.

Note A grammar and style checker can provide some help with inexact language. For instance, you can set it to flag commonly confused words (such as *continuous/continual*), misused prepositions in idioms (such as *accuse for* instead of *accuse of*), and clichés. (See p. 61 on setting a checker.) But the checker can flag only words stored in its dictionary. It can't help you at all with inappropriate connotation, excessive abstraction, or other problems discussed in this chapter.

38a Using the right word for your meaning

Precisely expressing your meaning requires understanding both the denotations and the connotations of words. A word's **de-notation** is the thing or idea it refers to, the meaning listed in the dictionary without reference to the emotional associations it may arouse in a reader. Using words according to their established denotations is essential if readers are to grasp your meaning. Here are a few guidelines:

- ▼ **Become acquainted with a dictionary.** Consult it whenever you are unsure of a word's meaning.
- ▼ **Distinguish between similar-sounding words that have widely different denotations:**

Inexact Older people often suffer infirmaries [places for the sick].

Exact Older people often suffer infirmities [disabilities].

Some words, called **homonyms** (from the Greek meaning "same name"), sound exactly alike but differ in meaning: for example, *principal/principle* or *rain/reign/rein*. (See pp. 543–44 for a list of commonly confused homonyms.)

- ▼ **Distinguish between words with related but distinct denotations:**

Inexact Television commercials continuously [unceasingly] interrupt programming.

Exact Television commercials continually [regularly] interrupt programming.

In addition to their emotion-free denotations, many words also carry associations with specific feelings. These **connotations** can shape readers' responses and are thus a powerful tool for writers. (At the same time they are a potential snare for readers. See p. 189.) Some connotations are personal: the word *dog*, for instance, may have negative connotations for the letter carrier who has been bitten three times. Usually, though, people agree about connotations. The following word pairs are just a few of many that have related denotations but very different connotations:

pride: sense of self-worth

vanity: excessive regard for oneself

firm: steady, unchanging, unyielding

stubborn: unreasonable, bullheaded

enthusiasm: excitement

mania: excessive interest or desire

Understanding connotation is especially important in choosing among **synonyms**, words with approximately, but often not exactly, the same meanings. For instance, *cry* and *weep* both denote the shedding of tears, but *cry* more than *weep* connotes a sobbing sound accompanying the tears. *Sob* itself connotes broken, gasping crying, with tears, whereas *wail* connotes sustained sound, perhaps without tears.

Several resources can help you track down words with the exact connotations you want:

- v **A standard dictionary distinguishes among synonyms.** See page 539 for an example.
- v **A dictionary of synonyms lists and defines synonyms in groups.** See page 538 for a title.
- v **A thesaurus lists synonyms but does not distinguish among them.** See page 538 for a title.

Note Because a thesaurus lacks definitions, it can only suggest possibilities. You will still need a dictionary to discover words' exact denotations and connotations.

EXERCISE 38.1 Revising: Denotation

Revise any underlined word below that is not used according to its established denotation. Circle any word used correctly. Consult a dictionary if you are uncertain of a word's precise meaning. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Example:

Sam and Dave are going to Bermuda and Hauppauge, respect-fully, for spring vacation.

Sam and Dave are going to Bermuda and Hauppauge, respec-tively, for spring vacation.

1. Maxine Hong Kingston was rewarded many prizes for her first two books, *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*.
2. Kingston sites her mother's tales about ancestors and ancient Chinese customs as the sources of these memoirs.
3. In her childhood Kingston was greatly effected by her mother's tale about a pregnant aunt who was ostracized by villagers.
4. The aunt gained avengance by drowning herself in the village's water supply.
5. Kingston decided to make her nameless relative infamous by giving her immortality in *The Woman Warrior*.

EXERCISE 38.2 Considering the connotations of words

Fill the blank in each sentence below with the most appropriate word from the list in parentheses. Consult a dictionary to be sure of your choice. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Example:

CHANNEL 5 OSHU THE WINNER BEFORE THE POLLS CLOSED. (*ADVERTISED, DECLARED, BROADCAST, PROMULGATED*)

Channel 5 declared Oshu the winner before the polls closed.

1. AIDS is a serious health . (*problem, worry, difficulty, plight*)
2. Once the virus has entered the blood system, it T-cells. (*murders, destroys, slaughters, executes*)
3. The of T-cells is to combat infections. (*ambition, function, aim, goal*)
4. Without enough T-cells, the body is nearly against infections. (*defenseless, hopeless, desperate*)
5. To prevent exposure to the disease, one should be especially in sexual relationships. (*chary, circumspect, cautious, calculating*)

38b Balancing the abstract and concrete, the general and specific

To understand a subject as you understand it, your readers need ample guidance from your words. When you describe a building as *beautiful* and nothing more, you force readers to provide their own ideas of what makes a building beautiful. If readers bother (and they may not), they surely will not conjure up the image you had in mind. Use words to tell readers what you want them to know, that the beautiful building is *a sleek, silver skyscraper with blue-tinted windows*, for instance, or *a Victorian brick courthouse with tall, arched windows*.

Clear, exact writing balances abstract and general words, which outline ideas and objects, with concrete and specific words, which sharpen and solidify.

- v **Abstract words** name qualities and ideas: *beauty, inflation, management, culture, liberal*.
- Concrete words** name things we can know by our five senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell: *sleek, humming, brick, bitter, musty*.

- v **General words** name classes or groups of things, such as *buildings*, *weather*, or *birds*, and include all the varieties of the class. **Specific words** limit a general class, such as *buildings*, by naming a variety, such as *skyscraper*, *Victorian courthouse*, or *hut*.

Note that *general* and *specific* are relative terms: the same word may be more general than some words but more specific than others.

	General	
weather		bird
rain		parrot
downpour		cockatoo
sudden downpour		my pet cockatoo Moyshe
	Specific	

Abstract and general words are useful in the broad statements that set the course for your writing:

The wild horse in America has a romantic history.

We must be free from government interference in our affairs.

Relations between the sexes today are only a little more relaxed than they were in the past.

But the sentences following these would have to develop the ideas with concrete and specific details. When your meaning calls for an abstract or general word, make sure you define it, explain it, and narrow it. Look at how concrete and specific information turns vague sentences into exact ones in the examples below:

Vague The size of his hands made his smallness real. [How big were his hands? How small was he?]

Exact Not until I saw his delicate, doll-like hands did I realize that he stood a full head shorter than most other men.

Vague **The long flood caused a lot of awful destruction in the town.** [How long did the flood last? What destruction did it cause? Why was the destruction awful?]

Exact The flood waters, which rose swiftly and then stayed stubbornly high for days, killed at least six townspeople and made life a misery for the hundreds who had to evacuate their ruined homes and stores.

Note You can use your computer's Find function to help you find and revise abstract and general words that you tend to overuse. Examples of such words might include *nice*, *interesting*, *things*, *very*, *good*, *a lot*, *a little*, and *some*.

EXERCISE 38.3 Revising: Concrete and specific words

Make the following paragraph vivid by expanding the sentences with appropriate details of your own choosing. Substitute concrete and specific words for the abstract and general ones that are underlined. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

I remember clearly how awful I felt the first time I attended Mrs. Murphy's second-grade class. I had recently moved from a small town in Missouri to a crowded suburb of Chicago. My new school looked big from the outside and seemed dark inside as I walked down the long corridor toward the classroom. The class was noisy as I neared the door; but when I entered, everyone became quiet and looked at me. I felt uncomfortable and wanted a place to hide. However, in a loud voice Mrs. Murphy directed me to the front of the room to introduce myself.

EXERCISE 38.4 Using concrete and specific words

For each abstract or general word below, give at least two other words or phrases that illustrate increasing specificity or concreteness. Consult a dictionary as needed. Use the most specific or concrete word from each group in a sentence of your own. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Example:

awake, watchful, vigilant

Vigilant guards patrol the buildings.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1. fabric | 6. green | 11. teacher |
| 2. delicious | 7. walk (<i>verb</i>) | 12. nice |
| 3. car | flower | 13. virtue |
| 4. narrow-minded | 9. serious | 14. angry |
| 5. reach (<i>verb</i>) | 10. pretty | 15. crime |

38c Using idioms

Idioms are expressions in any language whose meanings cannot be determined simply from the words in them or whose component words cannot be predicted by any rule of grammar; often, they violate conventional grammar. Examples of English idioms include *put up with*, *plug away at*, and *make off with*.

Idiomatic combinations of verbs or adjectives and prepositions can be confusing for both native and nonnative speakers of English. A number of these pairings are listed in the box below.

If you are learning standard American English, you are justified in stumbling over its prepositions: their meanings can shift depending on context, and they have many idiomatic uses. In mastering the prepositions of standard English, you probably can't avoid memorization. But you can help yourself by memorizing related groups, such as the following.

At, in, or on in expressions of time

Use *at* before actual clock time: *at 8:30*.

- Use *in* before a month, year, century, or period: *in April*, *in 2007*, *in the twenty-first century*, *in the next month*.
- Use *on* before a day or date: *on Tuesday*, *on August 3*, *on Labor Day*.

At, in, or on in expressions of place

- Use *at* before a specific place or address: *at the school*, *at 511 Iris Street*.
- Use *in* before a place with limits or before a city, state, country, or continent: *in the house*, *in a box*, *in Oklahoma City*, *in China*, *in Asia*.
- Use *on* to mean "supported by" or "touching the surface of": *on the table*, *on Iris Street*, *on page 150*.

For or since in expressions of time

- Use *for* before a period of time: *for an hour*, *for two years*.
- Use *since* before a specific point in time: *since 1999*, *since Friday*.

A dictionary of English as a second language is the best source for the meanings of prepositions; see the recommendations on page 537. In addition, some references focus on prepositions. See, for instance, volume 1 (*Verbs with Prepositions and Particles*) of the *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English*.

EXERCISE 38.5 Using prepositions in idioms

Insert the preposition that correctly completes each idiom in the following sentences. Consult the box on the previous page or a dictionary as needed. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Example:

I disagree many feminists who say women should not be homemakers.

I disagree with many feminists who say women should not be homemakers.

1. As Mark and Lana waited the justice of the peace, they seemed oblivious the other people in the lobby.
2. But Mark inferred Lana's glance at a handsome man that she was no longer occupied him alone.
3. Angry Lana, Mark charged her not loving him enough to get married.
4. Impatient Mark's childish behavior, Lana disagreed his interpretation of her glance.
5. They decided that if they could differ so violently a minor incident, they should part each other.

38d Using figurative language

Figurative language (or a **figure of speech**) departs from the literal meanings (the denotations) of words, usually by comparing very different ideas or objects:

Literal As I try to write, I can think of nothing to say.
 Figurative As I try to write, my mind is a slab of black slate.

Imaginatively and carefully used, figurative language can capture meaning more precisely and feelingly than literal language.

Figurative language is commonplace in speech. Having *slept like a log*, you may get up to find it *raining cats and dogs*. But the rapid exchange of speech leaves little time for inventiveness, and most figures of daily conversation, like those above, are worn and hackneyed. Writing gives you time to reject the tired figure and to search out fresh, concrete words and phrases.

The two most common figures of speech are the simile and the metaphor. Both compare two things of different classes, often one abstract and the other concrete. A **simile** makes the comparison explicit and usually begins with *like* or *as*:

Whenever we grow, we tend to feel it, as a young seed must feel the weight and inertia of the earth when it seeks to break out of its shell on its way to becoming a plant. —Alice Walker

To hold America in one's thoughts is like holding a love letter in one's hand—it has so special a meaning. —E. B. White

Instead of stating a comparison, a **metaphor** implies it, omitting such words as *like* or *as*:

I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions. —Lillian Hellman

A school is a hopper into which children are heaved while they are young and tender; therein they are pressed into certain standard shapes and covered from head to heels with official rubber stamps. —H. L. Mencken

Two other figures of speech are personification and hyperbole. **Personification** treats ideas and objects as if they were human:

The economy consumes my money and gives me little in return.
 I could hear the whisper of snowflakes, nudging each other as they fell.

Hyperbole deliberately exaggerates:

She appeared in a mile of billowing chiffon, flashing a rhinestone as big as an ostrich egg.
 He yelled so loud that his voice carried to the next county.

To be successful, figurative language must be fresh and unstrained, calling attention not to itself but to the writer's meaning. One kind of figurative language gone wrong is the **mixed metaphor**, in which the writer combines two or more incompatible figures. Since metaphors often generate visual images in the reader's mind, a mixed metaphor can be laughable:

Mixed Various thorny problems that we try to sweep under the rug
 continue to bob up all the same.

To revise a mixed metaphor, follow through consistently with just one image:

Improved Various thorny problems that we try to weed out continue to thrive all the same.

EXERCISE 38.6 Analyzing figurative language

Identify each figure of speech in the following sentences as a simile or a metaphor, and analyze how it adds to the writer's meaning. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

1. A distant airplane, a delta wing out of nightmare, made a gliding shadow on the creek's bottom that looked like a stingray crossing upstream. —Annie Dillard
2. Her roots ran deep into the earth, and from those roots she drew strength enough to hold still against all the forces of chance and disorder. —N. Scott Momaday
3. As a member of the winning team (the graduating class of 1940) I had outdistanced unpleasant sensations by miles. I was headed for the freedom of open fields.—Maya Angelou
4. All artists quiver under the lash of adverse criticism.

—Catherine Drinker Bowen

5. Every writer, in a roomful of writers, wants to be the best, and the judge, or umpire, or referee is soon overwhelmed and shouted down like a chickadee trying to take charge of a caucus of crows.

—James Thurber

EXERCISE 38.7 USING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Invent appropriate figurative language of your own (simile, meta-phor, hyperbole, or personification) to describe each scene or quality below, and use the figure in a sentence. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Example:

The attraction of a lake on a hot day

The small waves like fingers beckoned us irresistibly.

1. The sound of a kindergarten classroom
2. People waiting in line to buy tickets to a rock concert
3. The politeness of strangers meeting for the first time
4. A streetlight seen through dense fog
5. The effect of watching television for ten hours straight

38e Using fresh, not trite, expressions

Trite expressions, or clichés, are phrases so old and so often repeated that they have become stale. They include the following:

acid test	beyond the shadow of a doubt
add insult to injury	brought back to reality
better late than never	cold, hard facts
cool as a cucumber	
crushing blow	
easier said than done	
face the music	
flat as a pancake	
green with envy	
hard as a rock	
heavy as lead	
hit the nail on the head	
hour of need	
ladder of success	
moving experience	
needle in a haystack	

Besides these old phrases, stale writing may also depend on fashionable words that are losing their effect: for instance, *lifestyle*, *enhance*, *excellent*, *fantastic*, and *caring*.

Many of these expressions were once fresh and forceful, but constant use has dulled them. They, in turn, will dull your writing by suggesting that you have not thought about what you are saying and have resorted to the easiest phrase.

Clichés may slide into your drafts while you are trying to express your meaning. In editing, then, be wary of any expression you have heard or used before. Substitute fresh words of your own or restate the idea in plain language.

Trite A healthful lifestyle enhances your ability to go for the gold, allows you to enjoy life to the fullest, and helps you live to a ripe old age.

Revised Living healthfully helps you perform well, enjoy life thoroughly, and live long.

EXERCISE 38.8 Revising: Trite expressions

Revise the following sentences to eliminate trite expressions. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Example:

The basketball team had almost seized victory, but it faced the test of truth in the last quarter of the game.

The basketball team seemed about to win, but the real test came in the last quarter of the game.

1. The disastrous consequences of the war have shaken the small nation to its roots.
 2. Prices for food have shot sky high, and citizens have sneaking suspicions that others are making a killing on the black market.
3. Medical supplies are so few and far between that even civilians who are as sick as dogs cannot get treatment.
4. With most men fighting or injured or killed, women have had to bite the bullet and bear the men's burden in farming and manufacturing.
5. Last but not least, the war's heavy drain on the nation's pocketbook has left the economy in a shambles.

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Idioms with prepositions

abide by a rule
abide in a place or state
accords with
according to
accuse of a crime
adapt from a source
adapt to a situation
afraid of
agree on a plan as a group
agree to someone else's plan
agree with a person
angry with
aware of
based on
capable of
certain of
charge for a purchase
charge with a crime
concur in an opinion
concur with a person
contend for a principle
contend with a person
dependent on
differ about or over a question
differ from in some quality
differ with a person
disappointed by or in a person
disappointed in or with a thing
familiar with
identical with or to
impatient for a raise
impatient with a person
independent of
infer from
inferior to
involved in a task
involved with a person
oblivious of or to one's surroundings
oblivious of something forgotten
occupied by a person
occupied in study
occupied with a thing
opposed to
part from a person
part with a possession
prior to
proud of
related to
rewarded by the judge
rewarded for something done
rewarded with a gift
similar to
superior to
wait at a place

wait for a train, a person
 wait on a customer
 point with pride
 ripe old age
 shoulder the burden
 smart as a whip
 sneaking suspicion
 sober as a judge
 stand in awe
 strong as an ox
 thin as a rail
 tired but happy
 tried and true
 untimely death
 wise as an owl

CHAPTER 39

Writing Concisely

Concise writing makes every word count. Conciseness is not the same as mere brevity: detail and originality should not be cut along with needless words. Rather, the length of an expression should be appropriate to the thought.

You may find yourself writing wordily when you are unsure of your subject or when your thoughts are tangled. It's fine, even necessary, to stumble and grope while drafting. But you should straighten out your ideas and eliminate wordiness during revision and editing.

Note Any grammar and style checker will identify at least some wordy structures, such as repeated words, weak verbs, passive voice, and *there is* and *it is* constructions. But a checker can't identify all potentially wordy structures, nor can it tell you whether a structure is appropriate for your ideas.

As you'll see in the examples that follow, wordiness is not a problem of incorrect grammar. A sentence may be perfectly grammatical but still contain unneeded words that interfere with your idea.

39a Focusing on the subject and verb

Using the subjects and verbs of your sentences for the key actors and actions will reduce words and emphasize important ideas. (See pp. 384–86 for more on this topic.)

Wordy The reason why most of the country shifts to daylight savings time is that winter days are much shorter than summer days.

Concise Most of the country shifts to daylight savings time because winter days are much shorter than summer days.

Focusing on subjects and verbs will also help you avoid several other causes of wordiness (also discussed further on pp. 384–86):

Nouns made from verbs

Wordy The occurrence of the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, is an event occurring about December 22.

Concise The winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, occurs about December 22.

Weak verbs

Wordy The earth's axis has a tilt as the planet is in orbit around the sun so that the northern and southern hemispheres are alternately in alignment toward the sun.

Concise The earth's axis tilts as the planet orbits the sun so that the northern and southern hemispheres alternately align toward the sun.

Passive voice

Wordy During its winter the northern hemisphere is tilted farthest away from the sun, so the nights are made longer and the days are made shorter.

Concise During its winter the northern hemisphere tilts away from the sun, making the nights longer and the days shorter.

See also pages 302–03 on changing the passive voice to the active voice, as in the example above.

39b Cutting or shortening empty words and phrases

Empty words and phrases walk in place, gaining little or nothing in meaning. When you cut or shorten them, your writing will move faster and work harder.

Many empty phrases can be cut entirely:

all things considered	in a manner of speaking
as far as I'm concerned	in my opinion
for all intents and purposes	last but not least
for the most part	more or less

Wordy As far as I am concerned, discrimination against women still exists in medicine for all intents and purposes.

Revised Discrimination against women still exists in medicine.

Other empty words can be cut along with some words around them:

angle	character	kind	situation
area	element	manner	thing
aspect	factor	nature	type
case	field		

Wordy The type of large expenditures on advertising that manufacturers must make is a very important aspect of the cost of detergents.

Concise Manufacturers' large advertising expenditures increase the cost of detergents.

Still other empty phrases can be reduced from several words to a single word:

For	Substitute
at all times	always
at the present time	now
at this point in time	now
in today's society	now
in the nature of	like
for the purpose of	for
in order to	to
until such time as	until

For	Substitute
for the reason that	because
due to the fact that	because
because of the fact that	because
by virtue of the fact that	because
despite the fact that	although
in the event that	if
by means of	by
in the final analysis	finally

Wordy At this point in time, the software is expensive due to the fact that it has no competition.

Revised The software is expensive now because it has no competition.

EXERCISE 39.1 Revising: Subjects and verbs; empty words and phrases

Revise the following sentences to achieve conciseness by focusing on subjects and verbs and by cutting or reducing empty words and phrases. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.) See also page 386 for an additional exercise in focusing on subjects and verbs.

Example:

I made college my destination because of many factors, but most of all because of the fact that I want a career in medicine.

I came to college mainly because I want a career in medicine.

1. *Gerrymandering* refers to a situation in which the lines of a voting district are redrawn so that a particular party or ethnic group has benefits.
2. The name is a reference to the fact that Elbridge Gerry, the governor of Massachusetts in 1812, redrew voting districts in Essex County.
3. On the map one new district was seen to resemble something in the nature of a salamander.
4. Upon seeing the map, a man who was for all intents and purposes a critic of Governor Gerry's administration cried out, "Gerrymander!"
5. At the present time, changes may be made in the character of a district's voting pattern by a political group by gerrymandering to achieve the exclusion of rival groups' supporters.

39c Cutting unnecessary repetition

Planned repetition and restatement can make writing more coherent (p. 83) or emphatic (pp. 390–91). But unnecessary repetition weakens sentences:

Wordy Many unskilled workers without training in a particular job are unemployed and do not have any work.

Concise Many unskilled workers are unemployed.

The use of one word two different ways within a sentence is confusing:

Confusing Preschool instructors play a role in the child's understanding of male and female roles.

Clear Preschool instructors contribute to the child's understanding of male and female roles.

The simplest kind of useless repetition is the phrase that says the same thing twice. In the following examples, the unneeded words are underlined:

biography of his life	habitual custom
circle around	important [basic] essentials
consensus of opinion	large in size
continue on puzzling in nature	
cooperate together	repeat again
few in number	return again
final completion	revert back
frank and honest exchange	square [round] in shape
the future to come	surrounding circumstances

Phrases like those above are redundant because the main word already implies the underlined word or words. The repetition is not emphatic but tedious. A dictionary will tell you what meanings a word implies. *Assassinate*, for instance, means "mur-der someone well known," so the following sentence is redundant: *Julius Caesar was assassinated and killed*.

EXERCISE 39.2 Revising: Unnecessary repetition

Revise the following sentences to achieve conciseness. Concentrate on eliminating repetition and redundancy. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Example:

Because the circumstances surrounding the cancellation of classes were murky and unclear, the editor of the student newspaper assigned a staff reporter to investigate and file a report on the circumstances.

Because the circumstances leading to the cancellation of classes were unclear, the editor of the student newspaper assigned a staffer to investigate and report the story.

1. Some Vietnam veterans coming back to the United States after their tours of duty in Vietnam had problems readjusting again to life in America.
2. Afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder, a psychological disorder that sometimes arises after a trauma, some veterans had psychological problems that caused them to have trouble holding jobs and maintaining relationships.
3. Some who used to use drugs in Vietnam could not break their drug habits after they returned back to the United States.
4. The few veterans who committed crimes and violent acts gained so much notoriety and fame that many Americans thought all veterans were crazy, insane maniacs.
5. As a result of such stereotyping of Vietnam-era veterans, veterans are included in the same antidiscrimination laws that protect other victims of discrimination.

39d Reducing clauses to phrases, phrases to single words

Modifiers—subordinate clauses, phrases, and single words—can be expanded or contracted depending on the emphasis you want to achieve. (See pp. 254–58 on phrases and clauses and 398–401 on working with modifiers.) When editing your sentences, consider whether any modifiers can be reduced without loss of emphasis or clarity:

Wordy The Channel Tunnel, which runs between Britain and France, bores through a bed of solid chalk that is twenty-three miles across.

Concise The Channel Tunnel between Britain and France bores through twenty-three miles of solid chalk.

39e Eliminating *there is* and *it is* constructions

You can postpone the sentence subject with the words *there is* (*there are*, *there was*, *there were*) and *it is* (*it was*). (See p. 264.) These constructions can be useful to emphasize the subject (as when introducing it for the first time) or to indicate a change in direction. But often they just add words and create limp substitutes for more vigorous sentences:

Wordy There were delays and cost overruns that plagued construction of the Channel Tunnel. It is the expectation of investors to earn profits at last, now that there are trains passing daily through the tunnel.

Concise Delays and cost overruns plagued construction of the Channel Tunnel. Investors expect to earn profits at last, now that trains pass daily through the tunnel.

39f Combining sentences

Often the information in two or more sentences can be combined into one tight sentence:

Wordy An unexpected problem with the Channel Tunnel is stowaways. The stowaways are mostly illegal immigrants. They are trying to smuggle themselves into England. They cling to train roofs and undercarriages.

Concise An unexpected problem with the Channel Tunnel is stowaways, mostly illegal immigrants who are trying to smuggle themselves into England by clinging to train roofs and undercarriages.

A number of exercises in this handbook give you practice in sentence combining. For a list, see “Sentence combining” in the Index.

39g Rewriting jargon

Jargon can refer to the special vocabulary of any discipline or profession (see p. 513). But it has also come to describe vague, inflated language that is overcomplicated, even incomprehensible. When it comes from government or business, we call it *bureaucratese*.

Jargon The weekly social gatherings stimulate networking by members of management from various divisions, with the aim of developing contacts and maximizing the flow of creative information.

Translation The weekly parties give managers from different divisions a chance to meet and to share ideas.

EXERCISE 39.3 Revising: Conciseness

Rewrite each passage below into a single concise sentence, using the techniques described in this chapter. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Example:

He was taking some exercise in the park. Then several thugs were suddenly ahead of him in his path.
He was exercising [or jogging or strolling] in the park when several thugs suddenly loomed in his path.

1. Chewing gum was originally introduced to the United States by Antonio López de Santa Anna. He was the Mexican general.
2. After he had been defeated by the Texans in 1845, the general, who was exiled, made the choice to settle in New York.
3. A piece of chicle had been stashed by the general in his baggage. Chicle is the dried milky sap of the Mexican sapodilla tree.
4. There was more of this resin brought into the country by Santa Anna's friend Thomas Adams. Adams had a plan to make rubber.
5. The plan failed. Then the occasion arose for Adams to get a much more successful idea on the basis of the use to which the resin was put by General Santa Anna. That is, Adams decided to make a gum that could be chewed.

EXERCISE 39.4 Revising: Conciseness

Make the following passage as concise as possible. Be merciless. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

At the end of a lengthy line of reasoning, he came to the conclusion that the situation with carcinogens [cancer-causing substances] should be regarded as similar to the situation with the automobile. Instead of giving in to an irrational fear of cancer, we should consider all aspects of the problem in a balanced and dispassionate frame of mind, making a total of the benefits received from potential carcinogens (plastics, pesticides, and other similar products) and measuring said total against the damage done by such products. This is the nature of most discussions about the automobile. Instead of responding irrationally to the visual, aural, and air pollution caused by automobiles, we have decided to live with them (while simultaneously working to improve on them) for the benefits brought to society as a whole.

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Visit the companion Web site for more help and additional exercises on writing concisely.

Ways to achieve conciseness

Wordy (87 words)

The highly pressured nature of critical-care nursing is due to the fact that the patients have life-threatening illnesses. Critical-care nurses must have possession of steady nerves to care for patients who are critically ill and very sick. The nurses must also have possession of interpersonal skills. They must also have medical skills. It is considered by most health-care professionals that these nurses are essential if there is to be improvement of patients who are now in critical care from that status to the status of intermediate care.

Concise (37 words)

Critical-care nursing is highly pressured because the patients have life-threatening illnesses. Critical-care nurses must possess steady nerves and interpersonal and medical skills. Most health-care professionals consider these nurses essential if patients are to improve to intermediate care.

Focus on subject and verb, and cut or shorten empty words and phrases.

Avoid nouns made from verbs.

Cut unneeded repetition.

Combine sentences.

Change passive voice to active voice.

Eliminate *there is* constructions.

Cut unneeded repetition, and reduce clauses and phrases.

CHAPTER 40

Using Dictionaries

A dictionary can answer most questions about words. This chapter shows you how to choose a dictionary that suits your purpose and how to read a dictionary without difficulty.

40a Choosing a dictionary

1 Abridged dictionaries

Abridged dictionaries are the most practical for everyday use. Often called desk dictionaries because of their convenient size, they usually list 150,000 to 200,000 words and concentrate on fairly common words and meanings.

The American Heritage College Dictionary

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary

The Random House Webster's College Dictionary

Webster's New World College Dictionary

Most of these dictionaries are available both in print and on CD-ROM, and some are available online (visit ablongman.com/

littlebrown for links). Your computer may include a dictionary that you can customize with words or meanings it does not cover. With an electronic dictionary, as with a print dictionary, you can look up words as you write, checking spellings, meanings, synonyms, and other information.

If English is not your first language, you probably should have a dictionary prepared especially for ESL students in addition to one of the dictionaries listed above. The dictionaries listed below give much more information on such matters as count versus noncount nouns, prepositions with verbs and adjectives, and other concerns of ESL students.

COBUILD English Language Dictionary

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. Longman Dictionary of American English is the American version.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. Oxford Dictionary of American English is the American version.

2 Unabridged dictionaries

Unabridged dictionaries are the most scholarly and comprehensive of all dictionaries, sometimes consisting of many volumes. They emphasize the history of words and the variety of their uses. An unabridged dictionary is useful when you are studying a word in depth, reading or writing about the literature of another century, or looking for a quotation containing a particular word. The following unabridged dictionaries are available at most libraries.

The Oxford English Dictionary, 20 volumes
The Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary
Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language

3 Special dictionaries

Special dictionaries limit their attention to a single class of word (for example, slang, engineering terms, abbreviations), to a single kind of information (synonyms, usage, word origins), or to a specific subject (African American culture, biography, history). (See Chapters 50–53 for lists of subject dictionaries in various academic disciplines.)

v For guidance on English usage

Usage guides provide help with commonly confused and misused words, phrases, idioms, and other matters:

R. W. Burchfield, *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage*
 Bryan A. Garner, *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage*

Practical English Usage, by Michael Swan, is a usage guide prepared especially for nonnative speakers of English.

v For the origins of words

Dictionaries of etymology, or word history, explain how words have evolved:

Charles T. Onions et al., eds., *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*
 Eric Partridge, *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*

v For information on slang

Dictionaries of slang explain the histories and meanings of conversational expressions. They can make entertaining reading.

J. E. Lighter, ed., *Historical Dictionary of American Slang*
 Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang*

v For information about synonyms

A thesaurus like *Roget's* provides extensive lists of words with related meanings. A dictionary of synonyms like *Webster's* contains discussions and illustrations of shades of meaning.

Robert L. Chapman, ed., *Roget's International Thesaurus*
Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms

Many electronic dictionaries include a thesaurus as well, and some thesauruses are available independently on CD-ROM or online. (Visit ablongman.com/littlebrown for links.) With an online thesaurus, you can easily find synonyms and insert them into your documents. Take care with any thesaurus, ensuring that you know the meaning of a synonym before you use it.

40b Working with a dictionary's contents

Dictionaries use abbreviations and symbols to squeeze a lot of information into a relatively small book. This system of condensed information may at first seem difficult to read. But all dictionaries include in their opening pages detailed information on the arrangement of entries, pronunciation symbols, and abbreviations.

Here is a fairly typical entry, from *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. The labeled parts are discussed on the pages that follow.

v Spelling and word division

The small initial letters for *reckon* indicate that it is not normally capitalized. (In contrast, *Franklin stove* is capitalized in *Merriam-Webster's* because *Franklin* is a proper noun.)

The centered period in **reck·on** shows the division into syllables. If you are breaking a word at the end of a line, follow the dictionary's division of the word into syllables. For a hyphenated compound word, such as *cross-question*, a dictionary shows the hyphen as part of the spelling: **cross-question**.

Dictionaries provide any acceptable variant spellings of a word at the beginning of an entry. For the word *dexterous*, *Merriam-Webster's* has “**dex·ter·ous** or **dex·trous**.”

v **Pronunciation**

In *Merriam-Webster's* the pronunciation appears between reversed slashes (//). The stressed syllable is preceded by an accent mark ('re-k@n).

Dictionaries use symbols to indicate how to pronounce a word because the alphabet itself does not record all the sounds in the language. (Listen, for example, to the different sounds of *a* in only three words: *far*, *make*, and *answer*.) Most dictionaries provide a key to the pronunciation symbols at least every other page.

v **Grammatical functions and forms**

Dictionaries give helpful information about a word's functions and forms. The *Merriam-Webster's* entry for *reckon* shows the word to be a verb (*vb*), with the past tense and past participle *reckoned* and the present participle *reckoning*, and with both transitive (*vt*) and intransitive (*vi*) meanings. (For the definitions of these terms, see p. 238.)

Most dictionaries provide not only the principal forms of regular and irregular verbs but also the plural forms of irregular nouns and the *-er* and *-est* forms of adjectives and adverbs. An adjective or adverb without *-er* and *-est* forms in the dictionary requires the addition of *more* and *most* to show comparison (see pp. 322–23).

v **Etymology**

Dictionaries provide the **etymology** of a word (its history) to indicate its origin and the evolution of its meanings and forms. The dictionary can compress much information about a word into a small space through symbols, abbreviations, and different type fonts. An explanation of these systems appears in the dictionary's opening pages. *Merriam-Webster's* traces *reckon* back most recently to Middle English (ME) and then further back to Old English (OE). The notation “(13c)” before the first definition indicates that the first recorded use of *reckon* to mean “count” occurred in the thirteenth century. When seeking the etymology of a word, be sure to read the entire history, not just the most recent event.

v **Meanings**

Dictionaries divide the general meaning of a word into particular meanings on the basis of how the word is or has been actually used. They arrange a word's meanings differently, either in order of their appearance in the language, earliest first, or in order of their frequency of use, most common first. (*Merriam-Webster's* follows the former practice.) To learn your dictionary's arrangement, consult its opening pages. Then read through a word's entire entry before settling on the meaning that fits the context of what you're reading or writing.

The *Merriam-Webster's* entry for *reckon* ends with two uses of the word in idiomatic expressions (*reckon with* and *reckon without*). These phrases are defined because, as with all idioms, their meanings cannot be inferred simply from the words they consist of (see p. 523).

v **Labels**

Dictionaries apply labels to words or to particular meanings that have a special status or use. **Style labels** restrict a word or one of its meanings to a particular level of usage:

- v **Slang:** words or meanings inappropriate in writing except for a special effect, such as *crumb* for “a worthless or despicable person.”
- v **Informal or colloquial:** words or meanings appropriate for informal writing but not formal writing, such as *great* to mean “very good,” as in *a great movie*.
- v **Nonstandard or substandard:** words or meanings inappropriate for standard American English, such as *ain't*.

- v **Vulgar or vulgar slang:** words or meanings considered offensive in speech and writing, such as profanity.
- v **Poetic or literary:** words or meanings used only in poetry or the most formal writing, such as *eve* for *evening* and *o'er* for *over*.

Subject labels tell us that a word or one of its meanings has a special use in a discipline or profession. In its entry for *relaxation*, for instance, *American Heritage* presents specialized meanings with the subject labels *physiology*, *physics*, and *mathematics*.

Region labels indicate that a particular spelling, pronunciation, or meaning of a word is not national but limited to an area. A regional difference may be indicated by the label *dialect*. *Merriam-Webster's* labels as dialect (*dial*) the uses of *reckon* to mean “suppose” or “think” (as in *I reckon I'll do that*). More specific region labels may designate areas of the United States or other countries.

Time labels indicate words or their meanings that the language, in evolving, has discarded. *Obsolete* designates words or meanings that are no longer used; *archaic* designates words or meanings that are out of date but are used occasionally.

See pages 510–17 for further discussion of levels of usage and their appropriateness in your writing.

v **Synonyms**

Synonyms are words whose meanings are approximately the same, such as *small* and *little*. *Merriam-Webster's* defines *reckon* with some words in small capital letters (COUNT, ESTIMATE, CONSIDER, and so on). These are both synonyms and cross-references, in that each word may be looked up in its alphabetical place. Some dictionaries devote separate paragraphs to words with many synonyms.

v **Illustrative quotations**

Dictionaries are made by collecting quotations showing actual uses of words in all kinds of speech and writing. Some of these quotations, or others that the dictionary makers invent, may appear in the dictionary's entries as illustrations of how a word may be used. Five such quotations illustrate uses of *reckon* in the *Merriam-Webster's* entry (in these quotations, ~ stands for the word being illustrated).

EXERCISE 40.1 Using a dictionary

Consult your dictionary on five of the following words. First find out whether your dictionary lists the oldest or the most common meanings first in its entries. Then, for each word, write down (a) the division into syllables, (b) the pronunciation, (c) the grammatical functions and forms, (d) the etymology, (e) each meaning, and (f) any special uses indicated by labels. Finally, use the word in at least two sentences of your own. (You can do this exercise online at [ablongman.com/littlebrown](http://www.ablongman.com/littlebrown).)

- | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| | 1. depreciation | 4. manifest | 7. potlatch | 10. toxic |
| 2. secretary | 5. assassin | 8. plain (<i>adj.</i>) | 11. steal | |
| 3. grammar | 6. astrology | 9. ceremony | 12. obelisk | |

<http://www.ablongman.com/littlebrown>

Visit the companion Web site for links to online dictionaries and other language resources.

Dictionary entry for *reckon*

CHAPTER 41

Spelling and the Hyphen

English spelling is difficult, even for some very experienced and competent writers. You can train yourself to spell better, and this chapter will help you. But you can also improve instantly by acquiring three habits:

- v **Carefully proofread all of your writing.**
- v **Be suspicious of your spellings.**
- v **Check a dictionary every time you doubt a spelling.**

Note A spelling checker can help you find and track spelling errors in your papers. But its usefulness is limited, mainly because it can't spot the common error of confusing words with similar spellings, such as *now/not*, *to/too*, *their/they're/there*, and *principal/principle*. See pages 60–61 for more on spelling checkers.

41a Recognizing typical spelling problems

Spelling well involves recognizing situations that commonly lead to misspelling: pronunciation can mislead you in several ways; different forms of the same word may have different spellings; and some words have more than one acceptable spelling.

1 Being wary of pronunciation

In English, unlike some other languages, pronunciation of words is an unreliable guide to their spelling. The same letter or combination of letters may have different sounds in different words. (Say aloud these different ways of pronouncing the letters *ough*: *tough*, *dough*, *cough*, *through*, *bough*.) In addition, some words contain letters that are not pronounced clearly or at all, such as the *ed* in *asked*, the silent *e* in *swipe*, or the unpronounced *gh* in *tight*.

Pronunciation is a particularly unreliable guide in spelling **homonyms**, words pronounced the same though they have different spellings and meanings: *great/grate*, *to/too/two*. Some commonly confused homonyms and near-homonyms, such as *accept/except*, are listed below. (See p. 551 for tips on how to use spelling lists.)

2 Distinguishing between different forms of the same word

Spelling problems may occur when forms of the same word have different spellings, as in the following examples.

Verbs and nouns

Verb	Noun	Verb	Noun
advise	advice	enter	entrance
describe	description	marry	marriage
speak	speech	omit	omission

Nouns and adjectives

Noun	Adjective	Noun	Adjective
comedy	comic	height	high
courtesy	courteous	Britain	British
generosity	generous		

Irregular verbs

begin, began, begun	know, knew, known
break, broke, broken	ring, rang, rung

Irregular nouns

child, children	shelf, shelves
goose, geese	tooth, teeth
mouse, mice	woman, women

Other differences

four, forty	thief, theft
-------------	--------------

3 Using preferred spellings

Many words have variant spellings as well as preferred spell-ings. Often the variant spellings listed in an American dictionary are British spellings.

American	British
color, humor	colour, humour
theater, center	theatre, centre
canceled, traveled	cancelled, travelled
judgment	judgement
realize	realise

41b Following spelling rules

Misspelling is often a matter of misspelling a syllable rather than the whole word. The following general rules focus on troublesome syllables, with notes for the occasional exceptions.

1 Distinguishing between *ie* and *ei*

Words like *believe* and *receive* sound alike in the second syllable, but the syllable is spelled differently. Use the familiar jingle to distinguish between *ie* and *ei*:

I before *e*, except after *c*, or when pronounced “ay” as in *neighbor* and *weigh*.

<i>i</i> before <i>e</i>	believe grief	bier thief	hygiene friend
<i>ei</i> after <i>c</i>	ceiling receive	conceive deceit	perceive conceit
<i>ei</i> sounded as “ay”	neighbor sleigh	weight freight	eight vein

Exceptions In some words an *ei* combination neither follows *c* nor is pronounced “ay.” These words include *either*, *neither*, *foreign*, *forfeit*, *height*, *leisure*, *weird*, *seize*, and *seizure*. This sentence might help you remember some of them: *The weird foreigner neither seizes leisure nor forfeits height.*

EXERCISE 41.1 Distinguishing between *ie* and *ei*

Insert *ie* or *ei* in the words below. Check doubtful spellings in a dictionary. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. br f | 5. for gn | 9. l surely | 13. h ght |
| 2. dec ve | 6. pr st | 10. ach ve | 14. fr ght |
| 3. rec pt | 7. gr vance | 11. pat nce | 15. f nt |
| 4. s ze | 8. f nd | 12. p rce | 16. s ve |

2 Keeping or dropping a final *e*

Many words end with an unpronounced or silent *e*: *move*, *brave*, *late*, *rinse*. Drop the final *e* when adding an ending that begins with a vowel:

advise + able = advisable	surprise + ing = surprising
force + ible = forcible	guide + ance = guidance

Keep the final, silent *e* when adding an ending that begins with a consonant:

battle + ment = battlement	care + ful = careful
----------------------------	----------------------

accurate + ly = accurately like + ness = likeness

Exceptions The silent *e* is sometimes retained before an ending beginning with a vowel. It is kept when *dye* becomes *dyeing*, to avoid confusion with *dying*. It is kept to prevent mispronunciation of words like *shoeing* (not *shoing*) and *mileage* (not *milage*). And the final *e* is often retained after a soft *c* or *g*, to keep the sound of the consonant soft rather than hard:

courageous	changeable	noticeable
outrageous	manageable	embraceable

The silent *e* is also sometimes *dropped* before an ending beginning with a consonant, when the *e* is preceded by another vowel:

argue + ment = argument
 due + ly = duly
 true + ly = truly

EXERCISE 41.2 Keeping or dropping a final *e*

Combine the following words and endings, keeping or dropping a final *e* as necessary to make correctly spelled words. Check doubtful spellings in a dictionary. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. malice + ious | 4. retire + ment | 7. note + able |
| 2. love + able | 5. sue + ing | 8. battle + ing |
| 3. service + able | 6. virtue + ous | 9. suspense + ion |

3 Keeping or dropping a final *y*

Words ending in *y* often change their spelling when an ending is added to them. Change the final *y* to an *i* when it follows a consonant:

beauty, beauties	worry, worried	supply, supplies
folly, follies	merry, merrier	deputy, deputize

But keep the *y* when it follows a vowel, when the ending is *-ing*, or when it ends a proper name:

day, days	cry, crying	May, Mays
obey, obeyed	study, studying	Minsky, Minskys

EXERCISE 41.3 Keeping or dropping a final *y*

Combine the following words and endings, changing or keeping a final *y* as necessary to make correctly spelled words. Check doubtful spellings in a dictionary. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. imply + s | 4. delay + ing | 7. solidify + s |
| 2. messy + er | 5. defy + ance | 8. Murphy + s |
| 3. apply + ing | 6. say + s9. | supply + ed |

4 Doubling consonants

Whether to double a word's final consonant depends first on the number of syllables in the word. In one-syllable words, double the final consonant when a single vowel precedes the final consonant. Otherwise, don't double the consonant.

slap, slapping	pair, paired
tip, tipping	park, parking

In words of more than one syllable, double the final consonant when a single vowel precedes the final consonant *and* the consonant ends a stressed syllable once the ending is added. Otherwise, don't double the consonant.

refer, referring	refer, reference
begin, beginning	relent, relented
occur, occurrence	despair, despairing

EXERCISE 41.4 Doubling consonants

Combine the following words and endings, doubling final consonants as necessary to make correctly spelled words. Check doubtful spellings in a dictionary. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. repair + ing | 4. shop + ed | 7. drip + ing |
| 2. admit + ance | 5. conceal + ed | 8. declaim + ed |
| 3. benefit + ed | 6. allot + ed | 9. parallel + ing |

5 Attaching prefixes

Adding a prefix such as *dis*, *mis*, and *un* does not change the spelling of a word. When adding a prefix, do not drop a letter from or add a letter to the original word:

uneasy	anti-intellectual	defuse	misstate
unnecessary	disappoint	de-emphasize	misspell
antifreeze	dissatisfied	misinform	

(See also p. 555 for when to use hyphens with prefixes: *prehistory* versus *ex-student*.)

6 Forming plurals**v Nouns**

Most nouns form plurals by adding *s* to the singular form:

boy, boys	table, tables
carnival, carnivals	Murphy, Murphys

Some nouns ending in *f* or *fe* form the plural by changing the ending to *ve* before adding *s*:

leaf, leaves	wife, wives
life, lives	yourself, yourselves

Singular nouns ending in *s*, *sh*, *ch*, or *x* form the plural by adding *es*:

kiss, kisses	church, churches
wish, wishes	Jones, Joneses

(Notice that verbs ending in *s*, *sh*, *ch*, or *x* form the third-person singular in the same way. *Taxes* and *lurches* are examples.)

Nouns ending in *o* preceded by a vowel usually form the plural by adding *s*:

ratio, ratios	zoo, zoos
---------------	-----------

Nouns ending in *o* preceded by a consonant usually form the plural by adding *es*:

hero, heroes	tomato, tomatoes
--------------	------------------

Exceptions Some very common nouns form irregular plurals:

child, children	man, men
mouse, mice	woman, women

Some English nouns that were originally Italian, Greek, Latin, or French form the plural according to their original language:

analysis, analyses	datum, data
basis, bases	medium, media
beau, beaux	phenomenon, phenomena
crisis, crises	piano, pianos
criterion, criteria	thesis, theses

A few such nouns may form irregular or regular plurals: for instance, *index*, *indices*, *indexes*; *curriculum*, *curricula*, *curriculumms*. The regular plural is more contemporary.

Noncount nouns do not form plurals, either regularly (with an added *s*) or irregularly. Examples of noncount nouns include *equipment*, *courage*, and *wealth*. (See p. 327.)

v Compound nouns

Form plurals of compound nouns in one of two ways. Add *s* to the last word when the component words are roughly equal in importance, whether or not they are hyphenated:

city-states	breakthroughs
-------------	---------------

painter-sculptors

bucket seats

Add *s* to a noun combined with other parts of speech:

fathers-in-law

passersby

Note, however, that most modern dictionaries give the plural of *spoonful* as *spoonfuls*.

EXERCISE 41.5 Forming plurals

Make the correct plural of each of the following singular words. Check doubtful spellings in a dictionary. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

- | | | | |
|------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. pile | 5. mile per hour | 9. Bales | 13. thief |
| 2. donkey | 6. box | 10. cupful | 14. goose |
| 3. beach | 7. switch | 11. libretto | 15. hiss |
| 4. summary | 8. sister-in-law | 12. video | 16. appendix |

41c Developing spelling skills

The following techniques can help you improve your spelling. In addition, do not overrely on your computer's spelling checker (see pp. 60–61).

1 Editing and proofreading carefully

If spelling is a problem for you, give it high priority while editing your writing (p. 48) and again while proofreading, your last chance to catch misspelled words (p. 58). Reading a draft backward, word by word, can help you spot mistakes such as switched or omitted letters in words you know. Because the procedure forces you to consider each word in isolation, it can also highlight spellings you may be less sure of. A sense of uncertainty is crucial in spotting and correcting spelling errors, even for good spellers who make relatively few errors. Listen to your own uncertainty, and let it lead you to the dictionary.

2 Using a dictionary

How can you look up a word you can't spell? Start by guessing at the spelling and looking up your guess. If that doesn't work, pronounce the word aloud to come up with other possible spellings, and look them up. Unless the word is too specialized to be included in your dictionary, trial and error will eventually pay off.

If you're using a spelling checker, it may do the guessing for you by providing several choices for misspelled words. But you may still need to check a dictionary to verify your choice.

3 Pronouncing carefully

Careful pronunciation is not always a reliable guide to spelling (see p. 543), but it can keep you from misspelling words that are often mispronounced. For example:

athletics (<i>not</i> atheletics)	laboratory (<i>not</i> labratory)
disastrous (<i>not</i> disasterous)	library (<i>not</i> libary)
environment (<i>not</i> envirmment)	lightning (<i>not</i> lightening)
frustrate (<i>not</i> fustrate)	mischievous (<i>not</i> mischievius)
government (<i>not</i> goverment)	nuclear (<i>not</i> nucular)
height (<i>not</i> heighth)	recognize (<i>not</i> reconize)
history (<i>not</i> histry)	representative (<i>not</i> representative)
irrelevant (<i>not</i> irrelvant)	strictly (<i>not</i> stricly)

4 Tracking and analyzing your errors

Keep a list of the words marked "misspelled" or "spelling" or "sp" in your papers. This list will contain hints about your particular spelling problems, such as confusing *affect* and *effect* or forming plurals incorrectly. (If you need help analyzing the list, consult your writing instructor.) The list will also provide a personalized study guide, a focus for your efforts to spell better.

5 Using mnemonics

Mnemonics (pronounced with an initial *n* sound) are techniques for assisting your memory. The *er* in *letter* and *paper* can remind you that *stationery* (meaning "writing paper") has an *er* near the end; *stationary* with an *a* means "standing in place." Or the word *dome* with its long *o* sound can remind you that the building in which the legislature meets is spelled *capitol*, with an *o*. The *capital* city is spelled with *al* like *Albany*, the capital of New York. If you identify the words you have trouble spelling, you can think of your own mnemonics, which may work better for you than someone else's.

6 Studying spelling lists

divide words automatically at appropriate breaks (in the Tools menu, select Language and then Hyphenation). To divide words manually, follow these guidelines:

- ∨ **Divide words only between syllables**—for instance, *win-dows*, not *wi-ndows*. Check a dictionary for correct syllable breaks.
- ∨ **Never divide a one-syllable word.**
- ∨ **Leave at least two letters on the first line and three on the second line.** If a word cannot be divided to follow this rule (for instance, *a-bus-er*), don't divide it.
- ∨ **Break an electronic address only after a slash.** Do not hyphenate, because readers may perceive any added hyphens as part of the address.

EXERCISE 41.6 Using hyphens in compound words

Insert hyphens as needed in the following compounds. Mark all compounds that are correct as given. Consult a dictionary as needed. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. reimburse | 6. seventy eight | 11. two and six |
| | 2. deescalate | 7. happy go lucky |
| cars | | person |
| 3. forty odd soldiers | 8. preexisting | 12. ex songwriter |
| 4. little known bar | 9. senator elect | 13. V shaped |
| 5. seven eighths | 10. postwar | 14. reeducate |

<http://www.ablongman.com/littlebrown>

Visit the companion Web site for more help and an additional exercise on spelling and the hyphen.

Words commonly confused

accept (to receive)
except (other than)
affect (to have an influence on)
effect (result)
all ready (prepared)
already (by this time)
allude (to refer to indirectly)
elude (to avoid)
allusion (indirect reference)
illusion (erroneous belief or perception)
ascent (a movement up)
assent (agreement)
bare (unclothed)
bear (to carry, or an animal)
board (a plane of wood)
bored (uninterested)
born (brought into life)
borne (carried)
brake (stop)
break (smash)
buy (purchase)
by (next to)
capital (the seat of a government)
capitol (the building where a legislature meets)
cite (to quote an authority)
sight (the ability to see)
site (a place)
desert (to abandon)
dessert (after-dinner course)
discreet (reserved, respectful)
discrete (individual or distinct)
elicit (to bring out)
illicit (illegal)
eminent (well known)
imminent (soon to happen)
fair (average, or lovely)
fare (a fee for transportation)
forth (forward)
fourth (after *third*)
gorilla (a large primate)
guerrilla (a kind of soldier)
hear (to perceive by ear)
here (in this place)
heard (past tense of *hear*)
herd (a group of animals)
hole (an opening)
whole (complete)
its (possessive of *it*)
it's (contraction of *it is* or *it has*)
lead (heavy metal)
led (past tense of *lead*)

lessen (to make less)
lesson (something learned)
meat (flesh)
meet (encounter)
no (the opposite of *yes*)
know (to be certain)
passed (past tense of *pass*)
past (after, or a time gone by)
patience (forbearance)
patients (persons under medical care)
peace (the absence of war)
piece (a portion of something)
persecute (to oppress, to harass)
prosecute (to pursue, to take
 legal action against)
plain (clear)
plane (a carpenter's tool, or an airborne vehicle)
presence (the state of being at hand)
presents (gifts)
principal (most important, or the head of a school)
principle (a basic truth or law)
rain (precipitation)
reign (to rule)
rein (a strap for controlling an
 animal)
raise (to build up)
raze (to tear down)
right (correct)
rite (a religious ceremony)
write (to make letters)

road (a surface for driving)
rode (past tense of *ride*)
scene (where an action occurs)
seen (past participle of *see*)
seam (a junction)
seem (appear)
stationary (unmoving)
stationery (writing paper)

straight (unbending)
strait (a water passageway)
their (possessive of *they*)
there (opposite of *here*)
they're (contraction of *they are*)
to (toward)
too (also)
two (following *one*)
waist (the middle of the body)
waste (discarded material)
weak (not strong)
week (Sunday through Saturday)
weather (climate)
whether (*if*, or introducing a choice)
which (one of a group)
witch (a sorcerer)
who's (contraction of *who is* or *who has*)
whose (possessive of *who*)
your (possessive of *you*)
you're (contraction of *you are*)
absence
abundance
acceptable
accessible
accidentally
accommodate
accomplish
accumulate
accuracy
accustomed
achieve
acknowledge
acquire
across
actually
address
admission
adolescent
advice
advising
against
aggravate
aggressive
all right
all together
allegiance
almost
a lot
already
although
altogether
amateur

among
amount
analysis
analyze
angel
annual
answer
apology
apparent
appearance
appetite
appreciate
appropriate
approximately
argument
arrest
ascend
assassinate
assimilation
assistance
associate
atheist
athlete
attendance
audience
average
bargain
basically
because
beginning
belief
believe
beneficial
benefited
boundary
breath
Britain
bureaucracy
business
calculator
calendar
caricature
carrying
cede
ceiling
cello
cemetery
certain
changeable
changing
characteristic
chief
chocolate
choose
chose
climbed
coarse
column
coming
commercial
commitment
committed
committee
competent
competition

complement
compliment
conceive
concentrate
concert
condemn
conquer
conscience
conscious
consistency
consistent
continuous
controlled
controversial
convenience
convenient
coolly
course
courteous
criticism
criticize
crowd
cruelty
curiosity
curious
curriculum
deceive
deception
decide
decision
deductible
definitely
degree
dependent
descend
descendant
describe
description
desirable
despair
desperate
destroy
determine
develop
device
devise
dictionary
difference
dining
disagree
disappear
disappoint
disapprove
disastrous
discipline
discriminate
discussion
disease
disgusted
dissatisfied
distinction
divide
divine
division
doctor

drawer
easily
ecstasy
efficiency
efficient
eighth
either
eligible
embarrass
emphasize
empty
enemy
entirely
entrepreneur
environment
equipped
especially
essential
every
exaggerate
exceed
excellent
exercise
exhaust
exhilarate
existence
expense
experience
experiment
explanation
extremely
familiar
fascinate
favorite
February
fiery
finally
forcibly
foreign
foresee
forty
forward
friend
frightening
fulfill
gauge
generally
ghost
government
grammar
grief
guarantee
guard
guidance
happily
harass
height
heroes
hideous
humorous
hungry
hurriedly
hurrying
hypocrisy
hypocrite

ideally
illogical
imaginary
imagine
imitation
immediately
immigrant
incidentally
incredible
independence
independent
individually
inevitably
influential
initiate
innocuous
inoculate
insistent
integrate
intelligence
interest
interference
interpret
irrelevant
irresistible
irritable
island
jealousy
judgment
kindergarten
knowledge
laboratory
leisure
length
library
license
lieutenant
lightning
likelihood
literally
livelihood
loneliness
loose
lose
luxury
lying
magazine
maintenance
manageable
marriage
mathematics
meant
medicine
miniature
minor
minutes
mirror
mischievous
missile
misspelled
morale
morals
mortgage
mournful
muscle

mysterious
naturally
necessary
neighbor
neither
nickel
niece
ninety
ninth
noticeable
nuclear
nuisance
numerous
obstacle
occasion
occasionally
occur
occurrence
official
omission
omit
omitted
opinion
opponent
opportunity
opposite
ordinary
originally
paid
panicky
paralleled
parliament
particularly
peaceable
peculiar
pedal
perceive
perception
performance
permanent
permissible
persistence
personnel
perspiration
persuade
persuasion
physical
physiology
physique
pitiful
planning
playwright
pleasant
poison
politician
pollute
possession
possibly
practically
practice
prairie
precede
preference
preferred
prejudice

preparation
prevalent
primitive
privilege
probably
procedure
proceed
process
professor
prominent
pronunciation
psychology
purpose
pursue
pursuit
quandary
quantity
quarter
questionnaire
quiet
quizzes
realistically
realize
really
rebel
rebelled
recede
receipt
receive
recognize
recommend
reference
referred
relief
relieve
religious
remembrance
reminisce
renown
repetition
representative
resemblance
resistance
restaurant
rhyme
rhythm
ridiculous
roommate
sacrifice
sacrilegious
safety
satellite
scarcity
schedule
science
secretary
seize
separate
sergeant
several
sheriff
shining
shoulder
siege
significance

similar
sincerely
sophomore
source
speak
specimen
speech
sponsor
strategy
strength
strenuous
stretch
strict
strictly
studying
succeed
successful
sufficient
summary
superintendent
supersede
suppress
surely
surprise
suspicious
teammate
technical
technique
temperature
tendency
than
then
thorough
though
throughout
together
tomatoes
tomorrow
tragedy
transferred
truly
twelfth
tyranny
unanimous
unconscious
undoubtedly
unnecessary
until
usable
usually
vacuum
vegetable
vengeance
vicious
villain
visible
weather
Wednesday
weird
wherever
whether
wholly
woman
women
writing

yacht