

The Oxford Guide to English Usage

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FRONT1 Introduction

It is one thing to use language; it is quite another to understand how it works.
(Anthony Burgess, *Joysprick*)

English usage is a subject as wide as the English language itself. By far the greater part of usage, however, raises no controversies and poses no problems for native speakers of English, just because it is their natural idiom. But there are certain limited areas—particular sounds, spellings, words, and constructions—about which there arises uncertainty, difficulty, or disagreement. The proper aim of a usage guide is to resolve these problems, rather than describe the whole of current usage.

The Oxford Guide to English Usage has this aim. Within the limits just indicated, it offers guidance in as clear, concise, and systematic a manner as possible. In effecting its aims it makes use of five special features, explained below.

1. **Layout.** In the Guide the subject of usage is divided into four fields: word formation, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Each field is covered by a separate section of the book, and each of the four sections has its own alphabetical arrangement of entries. Each entry is headed by its title in bold type. All the words that share a particular kind of spelling, sound, or construction can therefore be treated together. This makes for both economy and comprehensiveness of treatment. Note that Pronunciation is in two parts: A deals with the pronunciation of particular letters, or groups of letters, while B is an alphabetical list of words whose pronunciation gives trouble.

2. **Explanation.** The explanations given in each entry are intended to be simple and straightforward. Where the subject is inevitably slightly complicated, they begin by setting out familiar facts as a basis from which to untangle the complexities. The explanations take into account the approaches developed by modern linguistic analysis, but employ the traditional terms of grammar as much as possible. (A glossary of all grammatical terms used will be found in FRONT2. Technical symbols and abbreviations, and the phonetic alphabet, are not used at all.

3. **Exemplification.** Throughout Vocabulary and Grammar and where appropriate elsewhere, example sentences are given to illustrate the point being discussed. The majority of these are real, rather than invented, examples. Many of them have been drawn from the works of some of the best twentieth-century writers (many equally good writers happen not to have been quoted). Even informal or substandard usage has been illustrated in this way; such examples frequently come from speeches put into the mouths of characters in novels, and hence no censure of the style of the author is implied. The aim is to illustrate the varieties of usage and to display the best, thereby making it more memorable than a mere collection of lapses and solecisms would be able to do.

4. **Recommendation.** Recommendations are clearly set out. The blob ° is used in the most clear-cut cases where a warning, restriction, or prohibition is stated. The square U is occasionally employed where no restriction needs to be enforced. The emphasis of the recommendations is on the degree of acceptability in standard English of a particular use, rather than on a dogmatic distinction of right and wrong. Much that is sometimes condemned as “bad English” is better regarded as appropriate in informal contexts but inappropriate in formal ones. The appropriateness of usage to context is indicated by the fairly rough categories “formal” and “informal”, “standard”, “regional”, and “non-standard”, “jocular”, and so on. Some of the ways in which American usage differs from British are pointed out.

5. Reference. Ease of access to the entry sought by the user is a priority of the Guide. The division into four sections, explained above, means that (roughly speaking) only a quarter of the total range of pages need be looked through in order to find a particular entry. Within each section there are many cross-references to other entries; hypertext links are provided for these entries.

In addition to the four main sections described at 1 above, the Guide has three appendices: A is an outline of the principles of punctuation; B lists some of the clichés and overworked diction most widely disliked at present; and C gives a brief description of the characteristics of the five major overseas varieties of English.

Concise as it is, the Guide may be found by individual users to cover some ground that is already familiar and some that they consider it unnecessary to know about. It is impossible for an entry (especially in the field of grammar) not to include more facts than are strictly part of the question which the entry is designed to answer. Language is a closely woven, seamless fabric, not a set of building blocks or pigeon-holes, capable of independent treatment; hence there are bound to be some redundancies and some overlap between different entries. Moreover, every user has a different degree of knowledge and interest. It is the compiler's hope, however, that all will be instructed and enriched by any incidental gains in understanding of the language that the use of this Guide may afford.

FRONT2 Grammatical Terms Used in This Book

absolute used independently of its customary grammatical relationship or construction, e. g. Weather permitting, I will come.

acronym a word formed from the initial letters of other words, e. g. NATO.

active applied to a verb whose subject is also the source of the action of the verb, e. g. We saw him; opposite of passive.

adjective a word that names an attribute, used to describe a noun or pronoun, e. g. small child, it is small.

adverb a word that modifies an adjective, verb, or another adverb, expressing a relation of place, time, circumstance, manner, cause, degree, etc., e. g. gently, accordingly, now, here, why.

agent noun a noun denoting the doer of an action e. g. builder.

agent suffix a suffix added to a verb to form an agent noun, e. g. -er.

agree to have the same grammatical number, gender, case, or person as another word.

analogy the formation of a word, derivative, or construction in imitation of an existing word or pattern.

animate denoting a living being.

antecedent a noun or phrase to which a relative pronoun refers back.

antepenultimate last but two.

antonym a word of contrary meaning to another.

apposition the placing of a word, especially a noun, syntactically parallel to another, e. g. William the Conqueror.

article a/an (indefinite article) or the (definite article).

attributive designating a noun, adjective, or phrase expressing an attribute, characteristically preceding the word it qualifies, e. g. old in the old dog; opposite of predicative.

auxiliary verb a verb used in forming tenses, moods, and voices of other verbs.

case the form (subjective, objective, or possessive) of a noun or pronoun, expressing relation to some other word.

clause a distinct part of a sentence including a subject (sometimes by implication) and predicate.

collective noun a singular noun denoting many individuals; see "collective nouns" in topic 4. 9

collocation an expression consisting of two (or more) words frequently juxtaposed, especially adjective + noun.

comparative the form of an adjective or adverb expressing a higher degree of a quality, e. g. braver, worse.

comparison the differentiation of the comparative and superlative degrees from the positive (basic) form of an adjective or adverb.

complement a word or words necessary to complete a grammatical construction: the complement of a clause, e. g. John is (a) thoughtful (man), Solitude makes John thoughtful; of an adjective, e. g. John is glad of your help; of a preposition, e. g. I thought of John.

compound preposition a preposition made up of more than one word, e. g. with regard to.

concord agreement between words in gender, number, or person, e. g. the girl who is here, you who are alive, Those men work.

conditional designating (1) a clause which expresses a condition, or (2) a mood of the verb used in the consequential clause of a conditional sentence, e. g. (1) If he had come, (2) I should have seen him.

consonant (1) a speech sound in which breath is at least partly obstructed, combining with a vowel to form a syllable; (2) a letter usually used to represent (1); e. g. ewe is written with vowel + consonant + vowel, but is pronounced as consonant (y) + vowel (oo).

co-ordination the linking of two or more parts of a compound sentence that are equal in importance, e. g. Adam delved and Eve span.

correlative co-ordination co-ordination by means of pairs of corresponding words regularly used together, e. g. either..or.

countable designating a noun that refers in the singular to one and in the plural to more than one, and can be qualified by a, one, every, etc. and many, two, three, etc. ; opposite of mass (noun).

diminutive denoting a word describing a small, liked, or despised specimen of the thing denoted by the corresponding root word, e. g.

ringlet, Johnny, princeling.

diphthong see digraph.

direct object the object that expresses the primary object of the action of the verb, e. g. He sent a present to his son.

disyllabic having two syllables.

double passive see "double passive" in topic 4.16.

elide to omit by elision.

elision the omission of a vowel or syllable in pronouncing, e. g. let's.

ellipsis the omission from a sentence of words needed to complete a construction or sense.

elliptical involving ellipsis.

feminine the gender proper to female beings.

finite designating (part of) a verb limited by person and number, e. g. I am, He comes.

formal designating the type of English used publicly for some serious purpose, either in writing or in public speeches.

future the tense of a verb referring to an event yet to happen: simple future, e. g. I shall go; future in the past, referring to an event that was yet to happen at a time prior to the time of speaking, e. g. He said he would go.

gerund the part of the verb which can be used like a noun, ending in—ing, e. g. What is the use of my scolding him?

govern (said of a verb or preposition) to have (a noun or pronoun, or a case) dependent on it.

group possessive see "double passive" in topic 4.16.

hard designating a letter, chiefly c or g, that indicates a guttural sound, as in cot or got.

if-clause a clause introduced by if.

imperative the mood of a verb expressing command, e. g. Come here!

inanimate opposite of animate.

indirect object the person or thing affected by the action of the verb but not primarily acted upon, e. g. I gave him the book.

infinitive the basic form of a verb that does not indicate a particular tense or number or person; the to-infinitive, used with preceding to, e. g. I want to know; the bare infinitive, without preceding to, e. g. Help me pack.

inflexion a part of a word, usually a suffix, that expresses grammatical relationship, such as number, person, tense, etc.

informal designating the type of English used in private conversation, personal letters, and popular public communication.

intransitive designating a verb that does not take a direct object, e. g. I must think.

intrusive r see item 2 in topic 2.21

linking r see "r" in topic 2.21.

loan-word a word adopted by one language from another.

main clause the principal clause of a sentence.

masculine the gender proper to male beings.

mass noun a noun that refers to something regarded as grammatically indivisible, treated only as singular, and never qualified by those, many, two, three, etc. ; opposite of countable noun.

modal relating to the mood of a verb; used to express mood.

mood form of a verb serving to indicate whether it is to express fact, command, permission, wish, etc.

monosyllabic having one syllable.

nominal designating a phrase or clause that is used like a noun, e. g. What you need is a drink.

nonce-word a word coined for one occasion.

non-finite designating (a part of) a verb not limited by person and number, e. g. the infinitive, gerund, or participle.

non-restrictive see relative clauses.

noun a word used to denote a person, place, or thing.

noun phrase a phrase functioning within the sentence as a noun, e. g. The one over there is mine.

object a noun or its equivalent governed by an active transitive verb, e. g. I will take that one.

objective the case of a pronoun typically used when the pronoun is the object of a verb or governed by a preposition, e. g. me, him.

paradigm the complete pattern of inflexion of a noun, verb, etc.

participle the part of a verb used like an adjective but retaining some verbal qualities (tense and government of an object) and also used to form compound verb forms: the present participle ends in -ing, the past participle of regular verbs in -ed, e. g. While doing her work she had kept the baby amused.

passive designating a form of the verb by which the verbal action is attributed to the person or thing to whom it is actually directed (i. e. the logical object is the grammatical subject), e. g. He was seen by us; opposite of active.

past a tense expressing past action or state, e. g. I arrived yesterday.

past perfect a tense expressing action already completed prior to the time of speaking, e. g. I had arrived by then.

pejorative disparaging, depreciatory.

penultimate last but one.

perfect a tense denoting completed action or action viewed in relation to the present; e. g. I have finished now; perfect infinitive, e. g. He seems to have finished now.

periphrasis a roundabout way of expressing something.

person one of the three classes of personal pronouns or verb-forms, denoting the person speaking (first person), the person spoken to (second person), and the person or thing spoken about (third person).

phrasal verb an expression consisting of a verb and an adverb (and preposition), e. g. break down, look forward to.

phrase a group of words without a predicate, functioning like an adjective, adverb, or noun.

plural denoting more than one.

polysyllabic having more than one syllable.

possessive the case of a noun or a pronoun indicating possession, e. g. John's; possessive pronoun, e. g. my, his.

predicate the part of a clause consisting of what is said of the subject, including verb + complement or object.

predicative designating (especially) an adjective that forms part or the whole of the predicate, e. g. The dog is old.

prefix a verbal element placed at the beginning of a word to qualify its meaning, e. g. ex-, non-.

preposition a word governing a noun or pronoun, expressing the relation of the latter to other words, e. g. seated at the table.

prepositional phrase a phrase consisting of a preposition and its complement, e. g. I am surprised at your reaction.

present a tense expressing action now going on or habitually performed in past and future, e. g. He commutes daily.

pronoun a word used instead of a noun to designate (without naming) a person or thing already known or indefinite, e. g. I, you, he, etc., anyone, something, etc.

proper name a name used to designate an individual person, animal, town, ship, etc.

qualify (of an adjective or adverb) to attribute some quality to (a noun or adjective/verb).

reflexive implying the subject's action on himself or itself; reflexive pronoun e. g. myself, yourself, etc.

relative see "relative clauses" in topic 4.42.

restrictive see relative clauses

semivowel a sound intermediate between vowel and consonant, e. g. the sound of y and w.

sentence adverb an adverb that qualifies or comments on the whole sentence, not one of the elements in it, e. g. Unfortunately, he missed his train.

simple future see future

singular denoting a single person or thing.

soft designating a letter, chiefly c or g, that indicates a sibilant sound, as in city or germ.

split infinitive see "split infinitive" in topic 4.46.

stem the essential part of a word to which inflexions and other suffixes are added, e. g. unlimited.

stress the especially heavy vocal emphasis falling on one (the stressed) syllable of a word more than on the others.

subject the element in a clause (usually a noun or its equivalent) about which something is predicated (the latter is the predicate).

subjective the case of a pronoun typically used when the pronoun is the subject of a clause.

subjunctive the mood of a verb denoting what is imagined, wished, or possible, e. g. I insist that it be finished.

subordinate clause a clause dependent on the main clause and functioning like a noun, adjective, or adverb within the sentence, e. g. He said that you had gone.

substitute verb the verb do used in place of another verb, e. g. "He likes chocolate." "Does he?"

suffix a verbal element added at the end of a word to form a derivative, e. g. -ation, -ing, -itis, -ize.

superlative the form of an adjective or adverb expressing the highest or a very high degree of a quality, e. g. bravest, worst.

synonym a word identical in sense and use with another.

transitive designating a verb that takes a direct object, e. g. I said nothing.

unreal condition (especially in a conditional sentence) a condition which will not be or has not been fulfilled.

unstressed designating a word, syllable, or vowel not having stress.

variant a form of a word etc. that differs in spelling or pronunciation from another (often the main or usual) form.

verb a part of speech that predicates.

vowel (1) an open speech sound made without audible friction and capable of forming a syllable with or without a consonant; (2) a letter usually used to represent (1), e. g. a, e, i, o, u.

wh-question word a convenient term for the interrogative and relative words, most beginning with wh: what, when, where, whether, which, who, whom, whose, how.

FRONT3 Abbreviations

Amer. American

COD The Concise Oxford Dictionary (edn. 7, Oxford, 1982)

Hart's Rules. Hart's Rules for Compositors and Readers (edn. 39, Oxford, 1983)

MEU H. W. Fowler, A Dictionary of Modern English Usage (edn. 2, revised by Sir Ernest Gowers, Oxford, 1965)

NEB The New English Bible (Oxford and Cambridge, 1970)

ODWE The Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors (Oxford, 1981)

OED The Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford, 1933) and its supplementary volumes, A-G (1972); H-N (1976); O-Scz (1982).

TLS The Times Literary Supplement

1.0 Word Formation

This section is concerned with the ways in which the forms of English words and word elements change or vary. It deals primarily with their written form, but in many cases the choice between two or more possible written forms is also a choice between the corresponding spoken forms.

What follows is therefore more than merely a guide to spelling, although it is that too. A great part is taken up with guidance on the way in which words change when they are inflected (e. g. the possessive case and plural of nouns, the past tense and past participle of verbs) or when derivational prefixes and suffixes are added (e. g. the adjectival -able and -ible suffixes, the adverbial -ly suffix). Because this is intended as a very basic outline, little space has been given to the description of the meanings and uses of the inflected and compounded forms of words.

Instead, the emphasis is on the identification of the correct, or most widely acceptable, written form. Particular attention is given to the dropping, doubling, and alteration of letters when derivatives are formed.

Space has also been given to problems of spelling that are not caused by derivation, especially the different ways of spelling the same sound in different words (e. g. y or i in cider, cipher, gypsy, pygmy, etc.). A comprehensive coverage of all words requiring hyphens or capitals would require more space than is available here. The entries for these two subjects attempt only to offer guidelines in certain difficult but identifiable cases. For a fuller treatment the reader is referred to the Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors and Hart's Rules for Compositors and Readers. Wherever possible, notes are added to indicate where the conventions of American spelling differ from those recommended here.

In cases where there is widespread variation in the spelling of a particular word or form, the spelling recommended here is that preferred

1.1 abbreviations

It is usual to indicate an abbreviation by placing a point (full stop) after it, e. g. H. G. Wells, five miles S. (= south), B. Litt., Kt., Sun. (= Sunday), Jan. (= January), p. 7 (= page 7), ft., in., lb., cm.

However, no point is necessary:

1. With a sequence of capitals alone, e. g. BBC, MA, QC, NNE, BC, AD, PLC (and not, of course, with acronyms, e. g. Aslef, Naafi).
2. With the numerical abbreviations 1st, 2nd, etc.
3. C, F (of temperature), chemical symbols, and measures of length, weight, time, etc. in scientific and technical use.
4. Dr, Revd, Mr, Mrs, Ms, Mme, Mlle, St, Hants, Northants, p (= penny or pence).
5. In words that are colloquial abbreviations, e. g. co-op, demo, recap, trad, vac.

1.2 -ability and -ibility

Nouns ending in these suffixes undergo the same changes in the stem as adjectives in -able and -ible (see next entry).

1.3 -able and -ible

Words ending in -able generally owe their form to the Latin termination -abilis or the Old French -able (or both), and words in -ible to the Latin -ibilis. The suffix -able is also added to words of "distinctly French or English origin" (OED, s. v. -ble), and as a living element to English roots.

A. Words ending in -able. The following alterations are made to the stem:

1. Silent final -e is dropped (see "dropping of silent -e" in topic 1.17).

Exceptions: words whose stem ends in -ce, -ee, -ge, -le, and the following:

blameable	rateable
dyeable	ropeable
giveable (but forgivable)	saleable
hireable	shareable
holeable	sizeable
likeable	tameable
liveable	tuneable
nameable	unshakeable

° Amer. spelling tends to omit -e- in the words above.

2. Final -y becomes -i- (see "y to i" in topic 1.50).

Exception: flyable.

3. A final consonant may be doubled (see "doubling of final consonant" in topic 1.16).

Exceptions:

inferable	referable
preferable (but conferrable)	transferable

4. Most verbs of more than two syllables ending in -ate drop this ending when forming adjectives in -able, e. g. alienable, calculable, demonstrable, etc. Verbs of two syllables ending in -ate form adjectives in -able regularly, e. g. creatable, debatable, dictatable, etc. For a list of -able words, see Hart's Rules, pp. 83-4.

B. Words ending in -ible. These are fewer, since -ible is not a living suffix. Below is a list of the commonest. Almost all form their negative in in-, il-, etc., so that the negative form can be inferred from the positive in the list below; the exceptions are indicated by (un).

accessible	edible	perfectible
adducible	eligible	permissible
admissible	exhaustible	persuasive
audible	expressible	plausible
avertible	extensible	possible
collapsible	fallible	reducible

combustible	(un)feasible	repressible
compatible	flexible	reproducible
comprehensible	forcible	resistible
contemptible	fusible	responsible
corrigible	gullible	reversible
corruptible	indelible	risible
credible	(un)intelligible	sensible
defensible	irascible	(un)susceptible
destructible	legible	tangible
digestible	negligible	vendible
dirigible	ostensible	vincible
discernible	perceptible	visible
divisible		

1.4 ae and oe

In words derived from Latin and Greek, these are now always written as separate letters, not as ligatures 'ae', 'oe', e. g. aeon, Caesar, gynaecology; diarrhoea, homoeopathy, Oedipus. The simple e is preferable in several words once commonly spelt with ae, oe, especially medieval (formerly with ae) and ecology, ecumenical (formerly with initial oe).

° In Amer. spelling, e replaces ae, oe in many words, e. g. gynecology, diarrhea.

1.5 American spelling

Differences between Amer. and British spelling are mentioned at the following places:

- "-able and -ible" in topic 1.3;
- "ae and oe" in topic 1.4;
- "-ce or -se" in topic 1.14;
- "doubling of final consonant" in topic 1.16;
- "dropping of silent -e" in topic 1.17;
- "hyphens" in topic 1.27;
- "I and II" in topic 1.32;
- "-oul-" in topic 1.36;
- "-our or -or" in topic 1.37;
- "past of verbs, formation of" in topic 1.38;
- "-re or -er" in topic 1.41;
- "-xion or -ction" in topic 1.45;
- "-yse or -yze" in topic 1.49.

See also "Difficult and confusable spellings" in topic 1.51 passim.

1.6 ante- and anti-

ante- (from Latin) = "before"; anti- (from Greek) = "against, opposite to".

Note especially antechamber and antitype.

1.7 -ant or -ent

-ant is the noun ending, -ent the adjective ending in the following:

dependant	dependent
descendant	descendent
pendant	pendent
propellant	propellent

independent is both adjective and noun; dependence, independence are the abstract nouns.

The following are correct spellings:

ascendant, -nce, -ncy	relevant, -nce
attendant, -nce	repellent
expellent	superintendent, -ncy
impellent	tendency
intendant, -ncy	transcendent, -ncy

1.8 a or an

A. Before h.

1. Where h is aspirated, use a, e. g. a harvest, hero, hope.
 2. Where h is silent, use an, e. g. an heir, honour, honorarium.
 3. In words in which the first syllable is unstressed, use a, e. g. a historic occasion, a hotel.
- ° The older usage was not to pronounce h and to write an, but this is now almost obsolete.

B. Before capital letter abbreviations.

Be guided by the pronunciation.

1. Where the abbreviation is pronounced as one or more letter name s, e. g.

a B road a UN resolution

a PS a VIP

but

an A road an MP

an H-bomb an SOS

2. Where the abbreviation is pronounced as a word (an acronym), e. g.

a RADA student a SABENA airline typist

but

an ACAS official an OPEC minister

But where the abbreviation would in speech be expanded to the full word, use a or an as appropriate to the latter, e. g. a MS "a manuscript".

1.9 -ative or -ive

Correct are:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| (a) authoritative | qualitative |
| interpretative | quantitative |
| (b) assertive | preventive |
| exploitive | |

1.10 by- prefix

"Tending to form one word with the following noun, but a hyphen is still frequently found" (ODWE).

One word: bygone, byline, byname, bypass, bypath, bystander, byway, byword; the others (e. g. by-election, by-road) are hyphenated.

° Bye (noun) in sport, bye-bye (= good-bye) are the chief words with final -e.

1.11 c and ck

Words ending in -c interpose k before suffixes which otherwise would indicate a soft c, chiefly -ed, -er, -ing, -y, e. g.:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| bivouacker, -ing | panicky |
| colicky | picnicked, -er, -ing |
| frolicked, -ing | plasticky |
| mimicked, ing | trafficked, -ing |

Exceptions: arced, -ing, zined, zincify, zinging.

Before -ism, -ist, -ity, and -ize c (chiefly occurring in the suffix -ic) remains and is pronounced soft, e. g. Anglicism, physicist, domesticity, italicize.

1.12 capital or small initials

There are four classes of word that especially give trouble.

A. Compass points. Use capitals:

1. When abbreviated, e. g. NNE for north-north-east.
2. When denoting a region, e. g. unemployment in the North.
3. When part of a geographical name with recognized status, e. g. Northern Ireland, East Africa, Western Australia.
4. In Bridge.

Otherwise use small initials, e. g. facing (the) south, the wind was south, southbound, a southeaster.

B. Parties, denominations, and organizations.

"The general rule is: capitalization makes a word more specific and limited in its reference: contrast a Christian scientist (man of science) and a Christian Scientist (member of the Church of Christ Scientist)." (Hart's Rules, pp. 10-11.)

So, for example, Conservative, Socialist, Democratic (names of parties); Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Congregational; but conservative, socialist, democratic (as normal adjectives), catholic sympathies, orthodox views, congregational singing.

C. Words derived from proper names.

When connection with the proper name is indirect (the meaning associated with or suggested by the proper name), use a small initial letter, e. g.

(nouns) boycott, jersey, mackintosh, quisling;

(adjectives) herculean (labours), platonic (love), quixotic (temperament);

(verbs) blarney, bowdlerize, pasteurize.

When the connection of a derived adjective or verb with a proper name is immediate and alive, use a capital, e. g. Christian, Platonic (philosophy), Rembrandtesque, Roman; Anglicize, Christianize, Russify.

° Adjectives of nationality usually retain the capital even when used in transferred senses, e. g. Dutch courage, go Dutch, Russian salad, Turkish delight. The chief exceptions are arabic (numeral), roman (numeral, type).

D. Proprietary names.

The name of a product or process, if registered as a trade mark, is a proprietary name, and should be given a capital initial, e. g. Araldite, Coca-Cola, Marmite, Olivetti, Pyrex, Quaker Oats, Vaseline, Xerox.

1.13 -cede or -ceed

Exceed, proceed, succeed; the other verbs similarly formed have -cede, e. g. concede, intercede, recede. Note also supersede.

1.14 -ce or -se

Advice, device, licence, and practice are nouns; the related verbs are spelt with -se: advise, devise, license, practise. Similarly prophecy (noun), prophesy (verb).

° Amer. spelling favours licence, practice for both noun and verb; but the nouns defence, offence, pretence are spelt with c in Britain, s in America.

1.15 co- prefix

Most words with this prefix have no hyphen (even if a vowel, other than o, follows the prefix). Those that have a hyphen are:

1. Words with o following, e. g. co-operate (and derivatives; but uncooperative), co-opt, co-ordinate (often coordinate in Mathematics; also uncoordinated).

2. Words in which the hyphen preserves correct syllabication, so aiding recognition, e. g. co-latitude, co-religionist, co-respondent (distinguished from correspondent).

3. Words, especially recent or nonce coinages, in which co- is a living prefix meaning "fellow-", e. g. co-author, co-pilot, co-wife.

1.16 doubling of final consonant

1. When certain suffixes beginning with a vowel are added to nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs, the final consonant of the stem word is doubled before the suffix:

a. if the preceding vowel is written with a single letter (or single letter preceded by qu) and

b. if that vowel bears the main stress (hence all monosyllables are included).

So bed, bedding but head, heading; occur, occurred but offer, offered; befit, befitted but benefit, benefited.

Suffixes which cause this doubling include:

a. The verb inflexions -ed, -ing, e. g.

begged, begging	revved, revving
equipped, equipping	trek, trekking

b. The adjective and adverb suffixes -er, -est, e. g. sadder, saddest.

c. Various derivational suffixes, especially -able, -age, -en, -er, -ery, -ish, -y, e. g.

clubbable	waggery
tonnage	priggish
sadden	shrubby
trapper	

Exception: bus makes bused, busing.

2. Words of more than one syllable, not stressed on the last syllable, do not double the final consonant, unless it is l, when a suffix beginning with a vowel is added, e. g.

biased	gossipy	wainscoted
blossoming	lettered	wickedest
combated	pilotage	womanish
focusing		

Exception: worship makes worshipped, -ing.

Note that some other words in which the final syllable has a full vowel (not obscure e or i), some of which are compounds, also double the final consonant, e. g.

handicap	kidnap	periwig
hobnob	leapfrog	sandbag
horsewhip	nonplus	zigzag
humbug		

° Amer. sometimes kidnaped, kidnaping, worshiped, worshipping.

3. Consonants that are never doubled are h, w, x, y.

4. When endings beginning with a vowel are added, l is always doubled after a single vowel wherever the stress falls, e. g.

controllable	jeweller
flannelled	panelling

Note also woollen, woolly.

Exceptions: parallel makes paralleled, -ing; devil makes devilish; some (rare) superlatives such as brutalest, loyalest, civil(l)est.

° In Amer. spelling l obeys the same rules as the other consonants (except h, w, x, y), e. g. traveler, marvelous, but compelling, pally.

Note also Amer. woolen (but woolly).

5. A silent final consonant is not doubled. Endings are added as if the consonant were pronounced, e. g.

crocheted, -ing	rendezvouses (third person singular)
precised	rendezvousing

1.17 dropping of silent -e

A. When a suffix beginning with a vowel (including -y) is added to a word ending in silent -e (including e following another vowel), the -e is dropped.

So:

1. Before suffixes beginning with e- (i. e. -ed, -er, -ery, -est), e. g.

braver, bravery, bravest	hoed
dyed, dyer	issued
eeriest	manoeuvred
freer, freest	queued

2. Before -able, e. g.

adorable	briable
manoeuvrable	analysable
imaginable	usable

Exceptions:

a. Words ending in -ce and -ge retain the e to indicate the softness of the consonant, e. g. bridgeable, peaceable.

b. In a number of -able adjectives, e is retained in order to make the root word more easily recognizable. See list on “-able and -ible” in topic 1.3

c. ee is retained, e. g. agreeable, feeable, foreseeable.

d. The few adjectives formed on verbs ending in consonant + -le; e. g. handleable.

3. Before -age, e. g. cleavage, dotage, lineage (number of lines).

Exceptions: acreage, mileage.

4. Before -ing, e. g. centring, fatiguing, housing, manoeuvring. With change of i to y: dying, lying, etc. (See “i to y” in topic 1.30).

Exceptions:

a. ee, oe, and ye remain, e. g.

agreeing	eyeing	shoeing
canoeing	fleeing	tiptoeing
dyeing	hoeing	

b. blueing, cueing (gluing, issuing, queuing, etc. are regular).

c. ageing (raging, staging, etc. are regular).

d. routeing, singeing, swingeing, tingeing are distinguished from routing “putting to flight”, singing, swinging, and tinging “tinkling”.

5. Before -ish, e. g.

bluish	nicish
roguish	latish
purplish	whitish

Exception: moreish.

6. Before -y, e. g.

bony	chancy	mousy
caky	cliquy	stagy

Exceptions: See “-y or -ey adjectives” in topic 1.47

B. When a suffix beginning with a consonant (e. g. -ful, -ling, -ly, -ment, —ness, -some) is added to a word ending in silent -e, the -e is retained, e. g.

abridgement	definitely	judgement (judgment often in legal works)
acknowledgement	fledgeling	amazement
houseful	useful	awesome
whiteness		

Exceptions: argument, awful, duly, eerily, eeriness, truly, wholly.

° In Amer. spelling e is dropped after dg and before a suffix beginning with a consonant, e. g. fledgling, judgment.

C. Final silent -e is omitted in Amer. spelling in several words in which it is found in British spelling, and so often is final silent -ue in the endings -gogue, -logue, e. g.

ax	adz	program
analog	epilog	pedagog

1.18 -efy or -ify

The chief words with -efy (-efied, -efication, etc.) are:

liquefy	rarefy	torrefy
obstupefy	rubefy	tumefy
putrefy	stupefy	

All the others have -ify etc. See also “-ified or -yified” in topic 1.28

1.19 -ei or -ie-

The rule “i before e except after c” holds good for nearly all words in which the vowel-sound is ee, as Aries, hygienic, yield.

Exceptions where ie follows c are: prima facie, specie, species, superficies.

Note also friend, adieu, review, view.

The following words which are, or can be, pronounced with the ee- sound have ei:

caffeine	either	protein
casein	forfeit	receipt

ceiling	heinous	receive
codeine	inveigle	seise
conceit	Madeira	seize
conceive	neither	seizure
counterfeit	perceive	surfeit
deceit	peripeteia	weir
deceive	plebeian	weird

1.20 en- or in-

The following pairs of words can give trouble:

encrust (verb)	incrustation
engrain (verb) to dye in the raw state	ingrain (adjective) dyed in the yarn ingrained deeply rooted
enquire ask	inquire undertake a formal investigation
enquiry question	inquiry official investigation
ensure make sure	insure take out insurance (against risk: note assurance of life)

1.21 -er and -est

These suffixes of comparison may require the following changes in spelling:

1. Doubling of final consonant (see "doubling of final consonant" in topic 1.16).
2. Dropping of silent -e (see "dropping of silent -e" in topic 1.17).
3. Y to i (see "y to i" in topic 1.50).

1.22 -erous or -rous

The ending -erous is normal in adjectives related to nouns ending in -er, e. g. murderous, slanderous, thunderous. The exceptions are:

ambidextrous	disastrous	monstrous
cumbrous	leprous	slumbrous
dextrous	meandrous	wondrous

1.23 final vowels before suffixes

A. For treatment of final -e and -y before suffixes, see "dropping of silent -e" in topic 1.17, and "y to i" in topic 1.50.

B. For treatment of final -o before -s (suffix), see "plural formation" in topic 1.39, and "-s suffix" in topic 1.44.

C. In nearly all other cases, the final vowels -a, -i, -o, and -u are unaffected by the addition of suffixes and do not themselves affect the suffixes. So:

bikini ed (girls)	mascara ed	(they) rumba ed
echo ed	mustachio ed	taxi ed
henna ed	radio ed	
echo er	skier	veto er
area s	emu s	(he) ski s
camera s	gnu s	taxi s
corgi s	(he) rumba s	
echoi ng	scuba ing	taxi ing
radio ing	ski ing	veto ing

Exceptions: idea'd (having ideas); past ski'd from ski (contrast skied from sky).

D. Final -e in words taken from French is retained before all suffixes; the e of -ed is dropped after it, e. g.

appliqu ed	canap es	communiqu es
appliqu eing	chasse ing	emigr es
attach es	clich ed	souffl es
caf es		

1.24 for- and fore-

The prefix for- means "away, out, completely, or implies prohibition or abstention" (MEU). Fore- is the same as the ordinary word so spelt, = "beforehand, in front".

Note especially:

forbear refrain	forebear ancestor
forgather	foreclose
forgo abstain from	forego (esp. in foregoing (list), foregone (conclusion)
forfeit	

1.25 f to v

Certain nouns that end in f or f followed by silent e change this f to v in some derivatives. Most are familiar, but with a few derivatives there is variation between f and v or uncertainty about which consonant is correct; only these are dealt with below.

beef: plural beeves oxen, beeves kinds of beef.

calf (young bovine animal): calfish calflike; calves-foot jelly.

calf (of leg): (enormously) calved having (enormous) calves.

corf (basket): plural corves.

dwarf: plural dwarfs. ° Dwarves only in J. R. R. Tolkien's writings.

elf: elfish and elvish are both acceptable; elfin but elven.

handkerchief: plural handkerchiefs.

hoof: plural usually hoofs, but hooves is commonly found, e. g. The useless tool for horses" hooves (Graham Greene); Listening for Sebastian's retreating hooves (Evelyn Waugh); adjective hoofed or hooved.

knife: verb knife.

leaf: leaved having leaves (broad-leaved etc.) but leafed as past of leaf (through a book, etc.).

life: lifelong lasting a lifetime; livelong (day, etc., poetic: the i is short); the plural of still life is still lifes.

oaf: plural oafs.

roof: plural roofs. ° Rooves is commonly heard and sometimes written, e. g. Several acres of bright red rooves (George Orwell). Its written use should be avoided.

scarf (garment): plural scarves; scarfed wearing a scarf.

scarf (joint): plural and verb keep f.

sheaf: plural sheaves; verb sheaf or sheave; sheaved made into a sheaf.

shelf: plural shelves; shelvy having sandbanks.

staff: plural staffs but archaic and musical staves.

turf: plural turfs or turves; verb turf; turfy.

wharf: plural wharfs or wharves.

wolf: wolfish of a wolf.

1.26 -ful suffix

The adjectival suffix -ful may require the following changes in spelling:

1. Change of y to i (see "y to i" in topic 1.50).
2. Simplification of -ll (see "l and ll" in topic 1.32).

1.27 hyphens

A. Hyphens are used to connect words that are more closely linked to each other than to the surrounding syntax. Unfortunately their use is not consistent. Some pairs or groups of words are written as a single word (e. g. motorway, railwayman), others, despite their equally close bond, as separate words (e. g. motor cycle, pay phone); very similar pairs may be found with a hyphen (e. g. motor-cyclist, pay-bed). There are no hard and fast rules that will predict in every case whether a group of words should be written as one, with a

hyphen, or separately. Useful lists can be found in Hart's Rules, pp. 76-81; numerous individual items are entered in ODWE.

1. Groups consisting of attributive noun + noun are probably the most unpredictable. It is the nature of English syntax to produce limitless numbers of groups of this kind. Such a group generally remains written as separate words until it is recognized as a lexical item with a special meaning, when it may receive a hyphen. Eventually it may be written as one word, but this usually happens when the two nouns are monosyllabic and there is no clash between the final letter of the first and the first letter of the second.

This generalization is, however, a very weak guide to what happens in practice. Compare, for example, coal tar, coal-face, coalfield; oil well, oil-painting, oilfield; blood cell, blood-pressure, bloodstream.

2. Nouns derived from phrasal verbs, consisting of verb + adverb, are slightly more predictable. They are never written as two words, frequently hyphenated, and sometimes written as one, e. g. fall-out, play-off, set-back, turn-out; feedback, layout, runoff, turnover.

Phrases consisting of agent-noun in -er + adverb are usually hyphenated, e. g. picker-up, runner-up; those consisting of gerund in -ing + adverb are usually left as two words, e. g. Your coming back so soon surprised me, unless they have become a unit with a special meaning, e. g. Gave him a going-over.

3. Various collocations which are not hyphenated when they play their normal part in the sentence are given hyphens when they are transferred to attributive position before a noun, e. g.

a. adjective + noun: a common-sense argument (but This is common sense), an open-air restaurant (but eating in the open air).

b. preposition + noun: an out-of-date aircraft (but This is out of date), an in-depth interview (but interviewing him in depth).

c. participle + adverb: The longed-for departure and Tugged-at leaves and whirling branches (Iris Murdoch) (but the departure greatly longed for; leaves tugged at by the wind).

d. other syntactic groups used attributively, e. g. A tremendous wrapping-up-and-throwing-away gesture (J. B. Priestley); An all-but-unbearable mixture (Lynne Reid Banks).

4. Collocations of adverb + adjective (or participle) are usually written as two words when attributive as well as when predicative, e. g. a less interesting topic, an amazingly good performance, but may very occasionally take a hyphen to avoid misunderstanding, e. g. Sir Edgar, who had heard one or two more-sophisticated rumours (Angus Wilson) (this does not mean "one or two additional sophisticated rumours").

See also well.

5. When two words that form a close collocation but are not normally joined by a hyphen enter into combination with another word that requires a hyphen, it may be necessary to join them with a hyphen as well in order to avoid an awkward or even absurd result, e. g. natural gas needs no hyphen in natural gas pipeline, but natural- gas-producer may be preferred to the ambiguous natural gas-producer; crushed ice + —making looks odd in crushed ice-making machine, and so crushed-ice-making machine may be preferred. Occasionally a real distinction in meaning may be indicated, e. g. The non-German-speakers at the conference used interpreters versus The non-German speakers at the conference were all Austrians. Many people, however, prefer to avoid the use of long series of hyphenated words.

6. A group of words that has been turned into a syntactic unit, often behaving as a different part of speech from the words of which it is composed, normally has hyphens, e. g. court-

martial (verb), happy-go-lucky (adjective), good-for-nothing, stick-in-the-mud, ne'er-do-well (nouns).

7. A hyphen is used to indicate a common second element in all but the last word of a list, e. g. two-, three-, or fourfold.

B. Hyphens are also used within the word to connect a prefix or suffix to the stem. With most prefixes and suffixes it is normal to write the whole compound as a single word; the use of the hyphen is exceptional, and the writing of prefix or suffix and stem as two words virtually unknown.

The hyphen is used in the following cases:

1. After a number of prefixes that are considered to be living formative elements, i. e. prefixes that can be freely used to form new compounds: ex- (formerly), e. g. ex-President; neo- (denoting a revived movement), e. g. neo-Nazism; non-, e. g. non-stick; pro- (= in favour of), e. g.

pro-marketeer; self-, e. g. self-destructive.

Exceptions: Neoplatonism (-ic, etc.); selfsame, unselfconscious.

2. After a number of prefixes to aid recognition of the second element, e. g. anti-g, or to distinguish the compound from another word identically spelt, e. g. un-ionized (as against unionized); see also "co- prefix" in topic 1.15, "re- prefix" in topic 1.42.

3. Between a prefix ending with a vowel and a stem beginning with the same vowel, e. g. de-escalate, pre-empt; see also "co- prefix" in topic 1.15, "re- prefix" in topic 1.42.

4. Between a prefix and a stem beginning with a capital letter, e. g. anti-Darwinian, hyper-Calvinism, Pre-Raphaelite.

5. With some living suffixes forming specially coined compounds, e. g. Mickey Mouse-like; or still regarded to some extent as full words, such as -wise (= as regards -), e. g. Weather-wise we have had a good summer.

6. With suffixes in irregularly formed compounds, e. g. unget-at-able.

7. With the suffix -like after a stem ending in -l, e. g. eel-like, when attached to a word of two or more syllables, e. g. cabbage-like, and with the suffix -less after a stem ending in double -l, e. g. bell-less, will-lessness.

Note: In Amer. spelling there is a greater tendency than in British spelling to write compounds as one word, rather than hyphenated, e. g. nonplaying, nonprofit, roundhouse, runback, sandlot.

1.28 -ified or -yified

-ified is usual, whatever the stem of the preceding element, e. g.

citified	dandified	townified
countrified	Frenchified	whiskified

But ladyfied.

1.29 in- or un-

There is no comprehensive set of rules governing the choice between these two negative prefixes. The following guidelines are offered. Note that in- takes the form of il-, im-, or ir- before initial l, m, or r.

1. in- is from Latin and properly belongs to words derived from Latin, whereas un-, as a native prefix, has a natural ability to combine with any English word. Hence

a. un- may be expected to spread to words originally having in-. This has happened when the in- word has developed a sense more specific than merely the negative of the stem word:

unapt	inept
unartistic	inartistic
unhuman	inhuman
unmaterial	immaterial
unmoral	immoral
unreligious	irreligious
unsanitary	insanitary
unsolvable	insoluble

b. It is always possible, for the sake of a particular effect, for a writer to coin a nonce-word with un-:

A small bullied-looking woman with unabundant brown hair (Kingsley Amis)
Joyce's arithmetic is solid and unnonsensical (Anthony Burgess)

2. Adjectives ending in -ed and -ing rarely accept in- (while participles can of course be formed from verbs like inactivate, indispose, etc.).

Exception: inexperienced.

3. in- seems to be preferred before the prefixes ad-, co- (col-, com-, con-, cor-), de-, di(s)-, ex-, per-.

Important exceptions are:

unadventurous	uncooperative	undevout
uncommunicative	undemonstrative	unexceptionable
unconditional	undeniable	unexceptional
unconscionable	undesirable	unpersuasive
unconscious	undetactable	

4. un- is preferred before the prefixes em-, en-, im-, in-, inte(r)-.

5. Adjectives ending in -able usually take in- if the stem preceding the suffix -able is not, by itself, an English word:

educable, stem educ-, negative in-
palpable, stem palp-, negative im-

Exceptions: unamenable, unamiable, unconscionable.

They usually take un- if the stem has only one syllable and is an English word:

unbridgeable	unreadable
unlovable	unsaleable

Exceptions: incurable, immovable, impassable (that cannot be traversed: impassible = unfeeling).

But no generalization covers those with a polysyllabic English stem:

illimitable	undeniable
invariable	unmistakable

Note: Rule 2 overrides rule 3 (e. g. uncomplaining, undisputed, unperturbed); rule 3 overrides rule 5 (unconscionable); rule 4 overrides rule 5 (unimpressible).

1.30 i to y

When the suffix -ing is added to words (chiefly verbs) that end in -ie, e is dropped (see "dropping of silent -e" in topic 1.17), and i becomes y, e. g.

dying	lying
tying	vying

Exceptions: hie, sortie, stymie make hieing, sortieing, stymieing.

1.31 -ize and -ise

-ize should be preferred to -ise as a verbal ending in words in which both are in use.

1. The choice arises only where the ending is pronounced eyes, not where it is ice, iss or eez. So: precise, promise, expertise, remise.

2. The choice applies only to the verbal suffix (of Greek origin), added to nouns and adjectives with the sense "make into, treat with, or act in the way of (that which is indicated by the stem word)".

Hence are eliminated

a. nouns in -ise:

compromise	exercise	revise
demise	franchise	surmise
disguise	merchandise	surprise
enterprise		

b. verbs corresponding to a noun which has -is- as a part of the stem (e. g. in the syllables -vis-, -cis-, -mis-), or identical with a noun in -ise.

Some of the more common verbs in -ise are:

advertise	despise	incise
advise	devise	merchandise
apprise	disguise	premise
arise	emprise	prise (open)
chastise	enfranchise	revise
circumcise	enterprise	supervise
comprise	excise	surmise
compromise	exercise	surprise
demise	improvise	televise

3. In most cases, -ize verbs are formed on familiar English stems, e. g. authorize, familiarize, symbolize; or with a slight alteration to the stem, e. g. agonize, dogmatize, sterilize. A few words have no such immediate stem: aggrandize (cf. aggrandizement), appetize (cf. appetite), baptize (cf. baptism), catechize (cf. catechism), recognize (cf. recognition); and capsize.

1.32 I and II

Whether to write a single or double I can be a problem in the following cases:

1. Where a suffix is added to single final I: see "doubling of final consonant" in topic 1.16.

2. I is single when it is the last letter of the following verbs:

annul	enrol	fulfil
appal	enthral	instil
distil	extol	

These double the I before suffixes beginning with a vowel (see "doubling of final consonant" in topic 1.16), but not before -ment:

annulment	enthralment	distillation
enrolment	fulfilment	enthraling

° In Amer. spelling I is usually double in all these words except annul(ment), extol.

3. Final -ll is usually simplified to l before suffixes or word elements that begin with a consonant, e. g.

almighty, almost, etc.	fulfil	skilful
chilblain	gratefully	thralldom
dully	instalment	wilful

Exception: Before -ness, -ll remains in dullness, fullness.

° In Amer. spelling ll is usual in skillful, thrallldom, willful.

1.33 -ly

The suffix -ly is added to words (mainly nouns and adjectives) to form adjectives and adverbs, e. g. earth, earthly; part, partly; sad, sadly.

With certain words one of the following spelling changes may be required:

1. If the word ends in double ll, add only -y, e. g. fully, shrilly.

2. If the word ends in consonant + le, change e to y, e. g. ably, singly, terribly.

Exception: supplely (distinguished from the noun and verb supply).

3. If the word ends in consonant + y, change y to i and add -ly, e. g. drily, happily.

Exceptions: shyly, slyly, spryly, wryly.

4. If the word ends in unstressed -ey, change ey to i and add -ly, e. g. matily.

5. If the word has more than one syllable and ends in -ic, add -ally, even if there is no corresponding adjective in -ical, e. g. basically, scientifically.

Exceptions: politicly (from the adjective politic, distinguished from politically, from the adjective political), publicly (° not publically).

6. Final -e is exceptionally dropped before -ly in duly, eerily, truly, wholly (palely, puerilely, vilely, etc., are regular).

7. Final -y is exceptionally changed to i before -ly in daily, gaily (greyly, coyly are regular).

1.34 -ness

As a suffix added to adjectives, it may require the change of y to i: see "y to i" in topic 1.50

1.35 -or and -er

These two suffixes, denoting "one who or that which performs (the action of the verb)" are from Latin (through French) and Old English respectively, but their origin is not a sure guide to their distribution.

1. -er is the living suffix, forming most newly-coined agent nouns; but -or is frequently used with words of Latin origin to coin technical terms.

2. -er is usual after doubled consonants (except -ss-), after soft c and g, after -i-, after ch and sh, and after -er, -graph, -ion, and -iz-, e. g.

chopper, producer, avenger, qualifier, launcher, furnisher, discoverer, photographer, executioner, organizer.

Principal exceptions: counsellor, carburettor, conqueror.

3. -or follows -at- to form a suffix -ator, often but not always in words related to verbs in -ate, e. g.

duplicator, incubator.

Exception: debater.

Note: nouns in -olater, as idolater, do not contain the agent suffix.

4. No rule can predict whether a given word having -s-, -ss-, or -t- (apart from -at-) before the suffix requires -or or -er. So supervisor, compressor, prospector, but adviser, presser, perfecter.

-tor usually follows -c, unstressed i, and u, e. g. actor, compositor, executor; -ter usually follows f, gh, l, r, and s, e. g. drifter, fighter, defaulter, exporter, protester; but there are numerous exceptions.

5. A functional distinction is made between -or and -er in the following:

accepter one who accepts	acceptor (in scientific use)
adaptee one who adapts	adaptor electrical device
caster one who casts,	castor beaver; plant giving oil;
casting machine	sugar (sprinkler); wheel
censer vessel for incense	ensor official
conveyer one who conveys	conveyor device
resister one who resists	resistor electrical device
sailer ship of specified power	sailor seaman

6. A number of words have -er in normal use but -or in Law:

abetter	mortgager (mortgagor)
accepter	settler
granter	

1.36 -oul-

In the words mould, moulder, moult, and smoulder, Amer. spelling favours o alone instead of ou.

1.37 -our or -or

1. In agent nouns, only -or occurs as the ending (cf. -or and -er) e. g. actor, counsellor.

Exception: saviour.

2. In abstract nouns, -our is usual, e. g. colour, favour, humour. Only the following end in -or:

error	pallor	terror
horror	squalor	torpor
languor	stupor	tremor
liquor		

° In Amer. English -or is usual in nearly all words in which British English has -our (glamour and saviour are the main exceptions).

3. Nouns in -our change this to -or before the suffixes -ation, -iferous, -ific, -ize, and -ous, e. g.

coloration, humorous, odoriferous, soporific, vaporize, vigorous.

But -our keeps the u before -able, -er, -ful, -ism, -ist, -ite, and -less, e. g.

armourer, behaviourism, colourful, favourite, honourable, labourite, odourless, rigourist.

1.38 past of verbs, formation of

A. Regular verbs add -ed for the past tense and past participle, and may make the following spelling changes:

1. Doubling of final consonant (see "doubling of final consonant" in topic 1.16).

2. Dropping of silent -e (see "dropping of silent -e" in topic 1.17).

3. Change of y to i (see "y to i" in topic 1.50).

Note laid, paid, and said from lay, pay, and say.

B. A number of verbs vary in their past tense and past participle between a regular form and a form with -t (and in some cases a different vowel-sound in the stem):

burn	kneel	leap	smell	spill
dream	lean	learn	spell	spoil

The -t form is usual in Received Pronunciation (see Received Pronunciation in topic 2.0) and should be written by those who pronounce it. The regular form is usual in Amer. English.

Bereaved is regular when the reference is to the loss of relatives by death; bereft is used when the reference is to loss of immaterial possessions.

Cleave is a rare word with two opposite meanings: (i) = stick; A man ... shall cleave unto his wife (Genesis 2:24) (regular). (ii) = split; past tense clave is archaic; clove, cleft, and regular cleaved are all permissible, but cleaved is usual in scientific and technical contexts; past participle, in fixed expressions, cloven-footed, cloven hoof, cleft palate, cleft stick; cleaved is technical, but probably also best used outside the fixed expressions.

° Earn is regular. There is no form earnt.

C. A number of verbs vary in the past participle only between the regular form and one ending in -(e)n:

hew, mow, saw, sew, shear, show, sow, strew, swell.

In most of these the latter form is to be preferred; in British English it is obligatory when the participle is used attributively as an adjective.

So new-mown hay, a sawn-off (Amer. sawed-off) shotgun, shorn (not sheared) of one's strength, a swollen gland; swollen or swelled head (= conceit) is a colloquial exception.

D. The past tense has -a-, the past participle -u-, in

begin	shrink	stink
drink	sing	swim
ring	sink	

° It is an error to use begun, drunk, etc. for the past tense, as if they followed clung, flung, spun, etc.

E. The past tense and past participle of the following verbs can cause difficulty:

abide (by) makes abided

alight makes alighted

bet: betted is increasingly common beside bet

bid (make a bid): bid

bid (command; say (goodnight, etc.)): bid is usual (bade, bidden are archaic)
broadcast unchanged in past tense and past participle
chide: chided is now usual (older chid)
forecast unchanged in past tense and past participle
hang: hanged is frequent for the capital punishment; otherwise only hung
knit: knitted is usual, but knit is common in metaphorical use (he knit his brows)
light makes past lit, past participle lit in predicative use (a fire was lit) but lighted
attributively (a lighted match)
quit makes quitted ° Amer. quit
reeve (nautical) makes rove
rid unchanged in past tense and past participle
speed makes sped but speeded in the senses "cause to go at (a certain) speed" and
"travel at illegal or dangerous speed"
spit makes spat ° Amer. spit
stave (to dent) staved or stove; (to ward off) staved
sweat makes sweated ° Amer. sweat
thrive: thrived is increasingly common beside throve, thriven

1.39 plural formation

Most nouns simply add -s, e. g. cats, dogs, horses, cameras.

A. The regular plural suffix -s is preceded by -e-:

1. After sibilant consonants, where ease of pronunciation requires a separating vowel, i. e. after

ch: e. g. benches, coaches, matches (but not conchs, lochs, stomachs where the ch has a different sound)

s: e. g. buses, gases, pluses, yeses (note that single s is not doubled)

sh: e. g. ashes, bushes

ss: e. g. grasses, successes

x: e. g. boxes, sphinxes

z: e. g. buzzing, waltzes (note quizzes with doubling of z)

Proper names follow the same rule, e. g. the Joneses, the Rogerses, the two Charleses.

° -es should not be replaced by an apostrophe, as the Jones'.

2. After -y (not preceded by a vowel), which changes to i, e. g. ladies, soliloquies, spies.

Exceptions: proper names, e. g. the Willoughbys, the three Marys; also trilbys, lay-bys, standbys, zlotys (Polish currency).

3. After -o in certain words:

bravoes (= ruffians; bravos
= shouts of "bravo!")

buffaloes

calicoes

cargoes

dingoes

dominoes

echoes

embargoes

goes

grottoes

haloes

heroes

innuendoes

mangoes

mementoes

mosquitoes

mottoes

Negroes

noes

peccadilloes

porticoes

potatoes

salvoes (= discharges salvos
= reservations, excuses)

stuccoes

tomatoes

tornadoes

torpedoes

vetoes

volcanoes

Words not in this list add only -s.

It is helpful to remember that -e- is never inserted:

a. when the o is preceded by another vowel, e. g. cuckoos, embryos, ratios.

b. when the word is an abbreviation, e. g. hippos, kilos.

c. with proper names, e. g. Lotharios, Figaros, the Munros.

4. With words which change final f to v (see "f to v" in topic 1.25), e. g. calves, scarves.

B. Plural of compound nouns.

1. Compounds made up of a noun followed by an adjective, a prepositional phrase, or an adverb attach -s to the noun, e. g.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| (a) courts martial | heirs presumptive |
| cousins-german | poets laureate |

But brigadier-generals, lieutenant-colonels, sergeant-majors.

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| (b) men-of-war | tugs of war |
| sons-in-law | |
| (c) hangers-on | whippers-in |
| runners-up | |

Note: In informal usage -s is not infrequently transferred to the second element of compounds of type (a).

2. Compounds which contain no noun, or in which the noun element is now disguised, add -s at the end. So also do nouns formed from phrasal verbs and compounds ending in -ful, e. g.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| (a) ne'er-do-wells | will-o'-the-wisps |
| forget-me-nots | |
| (b) pullovers | set-ups |
| run-throughs | |
| (c) handfuls | spoonfuls |

3. Compounds containing man or woman make both elements plural, as usually do those made up of two words linked by and, e. g.

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| (a) gentlemen ushers | women doctors |
| menservants | |
| (b) pros and cons | ups and downs |

C. The plural of the following nouns with a singular in -s is unchanged:

- | | | |
|-----------|--------|-------------|
| biceps | means | species |
| congeries | mews | superficies |
| forceps | series | thrips |
| innings | | |

The following are mass nouns, not plurals:

bona fides (= "good faith"), kudos

° The singulars bona-fide (as a noun; there is an adjective bona-fide), congerie, kudo, sometimes seen, are erroneous.

D. Plural of nouns of foreign origin. The terminations that may form their plurals according to a foreign pattern are given in alphabetical order below; to each is added a list of the words that normally follow this pattern. It is recommended that the regular plural (in -s) should be used for all the other words with these terminations, even though some are found with either type of plural.

1. -a (Latin and Greek) becomes -ae:

- | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|
| alga | lamina | nebula |
| alumna | larva | papilla |

Note: formula has -ae in mathematical and scientific use.

2. -eau, -eu (French) add -x:

- | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|
| beau | chateau | plateau |
| bureau | milieu | tableau |

3. -ex, -ix (Latin) become -ices:

- | | | |
|----------|--------|--------|
| appendix | cortex | matrix |
| calix | helix | radix |

Note: index, vortex have -ices in mathematical and scientific use (otherwise regular).

4. -is (Greek and Latin) becomes -es (pronounced eez):

- | | | |
|------------|---------------|-------------|
| amanuensis | crisis | oasis |
| analysis | ellipsis | parenthesis |
| antithesis | hypothesis | synopsis |
| axis | metamorphosis | thesis |
| basis | | |

5. -o (Italian) becomes -i:
concerto grosso (concerti grossi)
graffito ripieno
maestro virtuoso

Note: solo and soprano sometimes have -i in technical contexts (otherwise regular).

6. -on (Greek) becomes -a:
criterion parhelion phenomenon

Note: The plural of automaton is in -a when used collectively (otherwise regular).

7. -s (French) is unchanged in the plural (Note: it is silent in the singular, but pronounced -z in the plural):

chamois	corps	fracas
chassis	faux pas	patois

Also (not a noun in French): rendezvous.

8. -um (Latin) becomes -a:
addendum datum maximum
bacterium desideratum minimum
candelabrum dictum quantum
compendium effluvium scholium
corrigendum emporium spectrum
cranium epithalamium speculum
crematorium erratum stratum
curriculum

Note: medium in scientific use, and in the sense "a means of communication" (as mass medium) has plural in -a; the collective plural of memorandum "things to be noted" is in -a; rostrum has -a in technical use; otherwise these words are regular. In the technical sense "starting-point" datum has a regular plural.

9. -us (Latin) becomes -i:
alumnus fungus nucleus
bacillus gladiolus radius
bronchus locus stimulus
cactus narcissus terminus
calculus

Note: focus has plural in -i in scientific use, but otherwise is regular; genius has plural genii when used to mean "guardian spirit", but in its usual sense is regular; corpus, genus, opus become corpora, genera, opera.

° The following words of foreign origin are plural nouns; they should normally not be construed as singulars (see also as separate entries in Vocabulary):

bacteria	graffiti	phenomena
candelabra	insignia	regalia
criteria	media	strata
data		

E. There is no need to use an apostrophe before -s:

1. After figures: the 1890s.

2. After abbreviations: MPs, SOSs.

But it is needed in: dot the i's and cross the t's, fair do's, do's and don'ts.

1.40 possessive case

To form the possessive:

1. Normally, add -'s in the singular and -s' (i. e. apostrophe following the plural suffix -s) in the plural, e. g.

Bill's book	the Johnsons' dog
his master's voice	a girls' school

Nouns that do not form plural in -s add -'s to the plural form, e. g.

children's books	women's liberation
------------------	--------------------

2. Nouns ending in s add 's for the singular possessive, e. g.

boss's	Hicks's
Burns's	St James's Square
Charles's	Tess's
Father Christmas's	Thomas's

To form the plural possessive, they add an apostrophe to the s of the plural in the normal way, e. g.

bosses'	the octopuses' tentacles
the Joneses' dog	the Thomases' dog

French names ending in silent s or x add -'s, which is pronounced as z, e. g.

Dumas's (= Dumah's)	Cremieux's
---------------------	------------

Names ending in -es pronounced iz are treated like plurals and take only an apostrophe (following the pronunciation, which is iz, not iziz), e. g.

Bridges'	Moses'
Hodges'	Riches'

Polysyllables not accented on the last or second last syllable can take the apostrophe alone, but the form with -'s is equally acceptable, e. g.

Barnabas'	or	Barnabas's
Nicholas'or		Nicholas's

It is the custom in classical works to use the apostrophe only, irrespective of pronunciation, for ancient classical names ending in -s, e. g.

Ceres'	Herodotus'	Venus'
Demosthenes'	Mars'	Xerxes'

Jesus' "is an accepted liturgical archaism" (Hart's Rules, p. 31). But in non-liturgical use, Jesus's is acceptable (used, e. g., in the NEB, John 2: 3).

With the possessive preceding the word sake, be guided by the pronunciation, e. g.

for goodness' sake	but	for God's sake
for conscience' sake (!)		for Charles's sake

After -x and -z, use -'s, e. g. Ajax's, Berlioz's music, Leibniz's law, Lenz's law.

3. Expressions such as:

a fortnight's holiday	two weeks' holiday
a pound's worth	two pounds' worth
your money's worth	

contain possessives and should have apostrophes correctly placed.

4. In I'm going to the butcher's, grocer's, etc. there is a possessive with ellipsis of the word "shop". The same construction is used in I'm going to Brown's, Green's, etc., so that properly an apostrophe is called for. Where a business calls itself Brown, Green, or the like (e. g. Marks and Spencer, J. Sainsbury) the apostrophe would be expected before -s. But many businesses use the title Browns, Greens, etc., without an apostrophe (e. g. Debenhams, Barclays Bank). No apostrophe is necessary in a Debenhams store or in (go to or take to) the cleaners.

5. The apostrophe must not be used:

a. with the plural non-possessive -s: notices such as TEA'S are often seen, but are wrong.

b. with the possessive of pronouns: hers, its, ours, theirs, yours; the possessive of who is whose.

° it's = it is; who's = who is.

° There are no words her's, our's, their's, your's.

1.41 -re or -er

The principal words in which the ending -re (with the unstressed er sound—there are others with the sound ruh, e. g. macabre, or ray, e. g. padre) is found are:

accoutre	centre	louvre
*acre	*euchre	*lucre
amphitheatre	fibre	lustre

*cadre	goitre	manoeuvre
calibre	litre	*massacre
*meagre	ochre	sepulchre
*mediocre	*ogre	sombre
metre (note meter the measuring device)	philtre	sceptre
mitre	reconnoitre	theatre
nitre	sabre	titre
	spectre	*wiseacre

° All but those marked * are spelt with -er in Amer. English.

1.42 re- prefix

This prefix is followed by a hyphen:

1. Before another e, e. g. re-echo, re-entry.
2. So as to distinguish the compound so formed from the more familiar identically spelt word written solid, e. g.

re-cover (put new cover on): recover

re-form (form again): reform

re-sign (sign again): resign

1.43 silent final consonants

Words borrowed from French having silent final consonants give difficulty when inflexions are added to them:

- A. In the plural: see "plural formation" in topic 1.39.
- B. In the possessive: see "possessive case" in topic 1.40.
- C. With verbal inflexions: see "dropping of silent -e" in topic 1.17.

1.44 -s suffix

A. As the inflexion of the plural of nouns: see plural formation.

B. As the inflexion of the third person singular present indicative of verbs, it requires the same changes in the stem as the plural ending, namely the insertion of -e-:

1. After sibilants (ch, s, sh, x, z), e. g. catches, tosses, fixes, buzzes; note that single s and z are subject to doubling of final consonant (see "doubling of final consonant" in topic 1.16) though the forms in which they occur are rare, e. g. gasses, nonplusses, quizzes, whizzes.

2. After y, which is subject to the change of y to i (see 1.50), e. g. cries, flies, carries, copies.

3. After o: echo, go, torpedo, veto, like the corresponding nouns, insert -e- before -s; crescendo, radio, solo, zero should follow their nouns in having -s, but in practice there is variation.

1.45 -xion or -ction

Complexion, crucifixion, effluxion, fluxion, genuflexion, inflexion all have -x-; connection, reflection (which formerly sometimes had -x-) have -ct-; deflexion is increasingly being replaced by deflection.

° In Amer. spelling -ction is more usual in connection, deflection, genuflection, inflection, reflection.

1.46 -y, -ey, or -ie nouns

The diminutive or pet form of nouns can be spelt -y, -ey, or -ie. The majority of nouns which end in the sound of -y are so spelt (whether diminutives or of other origin), e. g.

aunty	granny	nappy
baby	missy	potty

The following are the main diminutives spelt with -ey (-ey nouns of other kinds are excluded from the list):

goosey	lovey-dovey	Sawney
housey-housey	matey	slavey
Limey	nursey	

The following list contains the diminutives in -ie, together with a number of similar nouns that are not in fact diminutives but do end in -ie. Note that most Scottish diminutives are spelt with -ie, e. g. corbie, kiltie.

beanie	genie (spirit;	movie
birdie	plural genii)	nightie
bookie	Geordie	oldie
brownie	gillie	pinkie (little
budgie	girlie	finger)
caddie (golf; tea caddy)	goalie	pixie
chappie	hippie	quicke
charlie	junkie	rookie
clippie	Kewpie (doll)	sheltie
cookie	laddie	softie
coolie	lassie	Tin Lizzie
dearie	mealie (maize;	walkie-talkie
doggie (noun;	mealy adjective)	zombie
doggy adjective)	mountie	

Note: bogie (wheeled undercarriage), bogey (golf), bogy (ghost).

1.47 -y or -ey adjectives

When -y is added to a word to form an adjective, the following changes in spelling occur:

1. Doubling of final consonant (see "doubling of final consonant" in topic 1.16).
2. Dropping of silent -e (see "dropping of silent -e" in topic 1.17).

Exceptions:

a. After u:

bluey	gluey	tissuey
-------	-------	---------

b. In words that are not well established in the written language, where the retention of -e helps to clarify the sense:

cagey	dikey	pricey
cottagey	matey	villagey
dicey	pacey	

Note also holey (distinguished from holy); phoney (of unknown origin).

3. Insertion of -e- when -y is also the final letter of the stem:

clayey	skyey	sprayey	wheyey
--------	-------	---------	--------

Also in gooey.

4. Adjectives ending in unstressed -ey (2 (a) and (b) and 3 above) change this -ey to -i- before the comparative and superlative suffixes -er and -est and the adverbial suffix -ly, e. g.

cagey: cagily	matey: matily	pricey: pricier
dicey: dicier	pacey: pacier	phoney: phonily
gooey: gooier		

Before -ness there is variation, e. g.

cagey: cageyness	matey: mateyness,	phoney: phoniness
clayey: clayeyness	matiness	wheyey: wheyiness

1.48 y or i

There is often uncertainty about whether y or i should be written in the following words:

Write i in:	Write y in:
cider	gypsy
cipher	lyke-wake
dike	lynch law
Libya	pygmy

lich-gate	style (manner)
linchpin	stylus
sibyl (classical)	stymie
sillabub	Sybil (frequently as Christian name)
silvan	syrup
siphon	tyke
siren	tympanum (ear-drum)
stile (in fence)	tyre (of wheel)
timpani (drums)	wych-elm
tiro	wych-hazel

1.49 -yse or -yze

This verbal ending (e. g. in analyse, catalyse, paralyse) is not a suffix but part of the Greek stem -lyse. It should not be written with z (though z is normally used in such words in America).

1.50 y to i

Words that end in -y change this to -i- before certain suffixes. The conditions are:

A. When the -y is not preceded by a vowel (except -u in -guy, -quy).

-y does not change to -i- when preceded by a vowel (other than u in -guy, -quy). So enjoyable, conveyed, parleyed, gayer, gayest, donkeys, buys, employer, joyful, coyly, enjoyment, greyness.

Exceptions: daily, gaily, and adjectives ending in unstressed -ey (see “-y or -ey adjectives” in topic 1.47).

B. When the suffix is:

1. -able, e. g. deniable, justifiable, variable.

Exception: flyable.

2. -ed (the past tense and past participle), e. g. carried, denied, tried.

3. -er (agent-noun suffix), e. g. carrier, crier, supplier.

Exceptions: flyer, fryer, shyer (one who, a horse which, shies), skyer (in cricket). Note that drier, prier, trier (one who tries) are regular.

4. -er, -est (comparative and superlative); e. g. drier, driest; happier, happiest.

5. -es (noun plural and third person singular present indicative), e. g. ladies, soliloquies, spies; carries, denies, tries.

Exceptions: see “plural formation” in topic 1.39

6. -ful (adjectives), e. g. beautiful, fanciful. (Bellyful is a noun, not an adjective.)

7. -less (adjectives), e. g. merciless, remediless.

Exceptions: some rare compounds, e. g. countryless, hobbyless, partyless.

8. -ly (adverbs), e. g. drily, happily, plaguily.

Exceptions: shyly, slyly, spryly, wryly.

9. -ment (nouns), e. g. embodiment, merriment.

10. -ness (nouns), e. g. happiness, cliquiness.

Exceptions: dryness, flyness, shyness, slyness, spryness, wryness; busyness (distinguished from business).

1.51 Difficult and confusable spellings

(not covered in previous entries)

The list below contains words (i) which occasion difficulty in spelling; (ii) of which various spellings exist; or (iii) which need to be distinguished from other words spelt similarly.

In each case the recommended form is given, and in some cases, for the sake of clarity, is followed by the rejected variant. Where the rejected variant is widely separated in alphabetical position from the recommended form, the former has been given an entry preceded by the mark and followed by “use” and the recommended form. The wording

added to some entries constitutes a guide to the sense, not an exhaustive definition or description.

accommodation
adaptation ° not adaption
adviser
° aerie: use eyrie
affront
agriculturist
ait ° not eyot
align, alignment ° not aline, alinement
alleluia
almanac (almanack only in some titles)
aluminium ° Amer. aluminum
ambiance (term in art)
ambience surroundings
amok ° not amuck
ampere
annex (verb)
annexe (noun)
any one (of a number)
anyone anybody
any time
any way any manner
anyway at all events
apophthegm ° Amer. apothegm
apostasy
archaeology
artefact
aubretia
aught anything
autarchy despotism
autarky self-sufficiency
auxiliary
ay yes (plural the ayes have it)
aye always
babu ° not baboo
bachelor
bail out obtain release, relieve financially
bale out parachute from aircraft
balk (verb)
balmy like balm
barmy (informal) mad
balk timber
bayoneted, -ing
behave ° Amer. behoove
bivouac (noun and verb)
bivouacked, bivouacking
blond (of man or his hair)
blonde (of woman or her hair)
born: be born (of child)
borne: have borne have carried or given birth to; be borne be carried: be borne by be carried by or given birth to by (a mother)
brand-new
brier ° not briar
bur clinging seed

burr rough edge, drill, rock, accent, etc.
cabbala, cabbalistic
caftan
calendar almanac
calender press
caliph
calligraphy
calliper leg support; (plural) compasses ° not caliper
callous (adjective)
callus (noun)
camellia shrub
canvas (noun) cloth
canvas (verb) to cover with canvas (past canvased)
canvass (verb) (past canvassed)
carcass
caviare
chameleon
chancellor
chaperon
Charollais
cheque (bank)
chequer (noun) pattern (verb) variegate; ° Amer. checker
chilli pepper
choosy
chord combination of notes, line joining points on curve
chukka boot
chukker (polo)
clarinettist ° Amer. clarinetist
coco palm
cocoa chocolate
coconut
colander strainer
commit(ment)
comparative
complement make complete, that which makes complete
compliment praise
computer
conjuror
connection
conqueror
conscientious
consensus
cord string, flex, spinal cord, rib of cloth
cornelian ° not carnelian
corslet armour, underwear
cosy ° Amer. cozy
council assembly
councillor member of council
counsel advice, barrister
counsellor adviser
court martial (noun)
court-martial (verb)
crape black fabric
crape crape fabric other than black; rubber; pancake
crevasse large fissure in ice

crevice small fissure
crosier
crumby covered in crumbs
crummy (informal) dirty, inferior
curb restrain, restraint
curtsy
° czar use tsar
dare say ° not daresay
debonair
depository (person)
depository (place)
descendant
desiccated
despatch: use dispatch
deterrable
divest (only Law: gen. use divest)
didicoy (tinker)
dilatation (medical)
dilator
dinghy boat
dingy grimy
disc ° Amer. disk
discreet judicious
discrete separate
disk (sometimes in computing) ° Amer. in all senses of disc
dispatch
dissect
dissociate ° not disassociate
disyllable
divest
doily
douse quench
dowse use divining rod
draft (noun) military party, money order, rough sketch (verb) sketch ° Amer. in all
senses of draught
draftsman one who drafts documents
draught act of drawing, take of fish, act of drinking, vessel's depth, current of air °
Amer. draft
draughtsman one who makes drawings, plans, etc; piece in game of draughts
duffel
ecology
ecstasy
ecumenical
educationist ° not educationalist
effrontery
° eikon: use icon
eirenicon ° not irenicon
embarrassment
embed
employee (masculine and feminine; no accent)
enclose
enclosure (but Inclosure Acts)
encroach
encyclopaedia
envelop (verb)

envelope (noun)
erector
every one (of a number)
everyone everybody
exalt raise, praise
exult rejoice
° eyot: use ait
eyrie ° not aerie
faecal
faeces
fee'd (a fee'd lawyer)
feldspar
feldspathic
felloe (of wheel) ° not felly
ferrule cap on stick
ferule cane
fetid ° not foetid
flotation
flu ° not 'flu
foetal, foetus ° Amer. fetal, fetus
foggy
forbade (past tense of forbid)
forestall
for ever for always
forever continually
forty
fount (type) ° Amer. font
fungous (adjective)
fungus (noun)
furore ° Amer. furor
fusilier
fusillade
gaol (official use ° Amer. jail (both forms found in Brit. literary use)
gaoler (as for gaol)
gauge (measure)
gazump ° not gazoomph, etc.
gibe jeer
gild make gold
° gild association: use guild
glycerine
gormandize eat greedily
gormless
gourmand glutton
gram
gramophone
grandad
granddaughter
grayling (fish, butterfly)
grey ° Amer. gray
griffin fabulous creature ° not gryphon
griffon vulture, dog
grill for cooking
grille grating
grisly terrible
grizzly grey-haired; bear

groin (anatomy; architecture)
grommet ° not grummet
groyne breakwater
guerrilla
guild association
gybe (nautical) ° Amer. jibe
haema-, haemo- (prefix meaning "blood")
haemorrhage
haemorrhoids
hallelujah
hallo
harass
hark
harum-scarum
haulm stem
hearken
hiccup
Hindu
homoeopathy
homogeneous having parts all the same
homogenize make homogeneous
homogenous having common descent
honorific
° hooping cough use whooping cough
horsy
horticulturist
hurrah; hurray ° not hooray, hooray
hussy ° not huzzy
hypocrisy
hypocrite
icon
idiosyncrasy
idyll
ignoramus plural ignoramuses
° imbed: use embed
impinging
impostor
° inclose, inclosure: use en-
incommunicado
in so far
insomuch
inure
investor
irenic
° irenicon: use eirenicon
its of it
it's it is
jail (see gaol)
jailor (see gaol)
jalopy
jam pack tightly; conserve
jamb door-post
° jibe: use gibe, gybe ° Amer. also = accord with
joust combat ° not just
° kabbala: use cabbala

° kaftan: use caftan
kebab
kerb pavement ° Amer. curb
ketchup
° khalif use caliph
kilogram
kilometre
koala
Koran
kowitz
labyrinth
lachrymal of tears
lachrymose tearful
lackey
lacquer
lacrimal (in science)
lacrimate, -ation -atory (in science)
largess
ledger account book
leger line (in music)
licensee
lickerish greedy
lightening making light
lightning (accompanying thunder)
limeade
linage number of lines
lineage ancestry
lineament feature
liniment embrocation
liqueur flavoured alcoholic liquor
liquor
liquorice
litchi Chinese fruit
literate
literature
litt,rateur
littoral
loadstone
loath(some) adjectives
loathe (verb)
lodestar
longevity
longitude ° not longtitude
lour frown
Mac (prefix) spelling depends on the custom of the one bearing the name, and this must be followed; in alphabetical arrangement, treat as Mac however spelt. Mac, Mc, M(c) or M'
mac (informal) mackintosh
mackintosh
maharaja
maharaneer
° Mahomet: use Muhammad
mamma
mandolin
manikin dwarf, anatomical model

manila hemp, paper
manilla African bracelet
mannequin (live) model
manoeuvrable ° Amer. maneuverable
mantel(piece)
mantel cloak
marijuana
marquis
marshal (noun and verb)
marten weasel
martial of war (martial law)
martin bird
marvellous ° Amer. marvelous
matins
matt lustreless
medieval not ° mediaeval
menagerie
mendacity lying
mendicity the state of being a beggar
millenary of a thousand; thousandth anniversary
millennium thousand years
millepede
milli- (prefix meaning one-thousandth)
milometer ° not mileometer
miniature
minuscule ° not miniscule
mischievous ° not mischievious
miscible (in science)
missel-thrush
missis (slang) ° not missus
misspell
mistletoe
mixable
mizen (nautical)
moneyed
moneys
mongoose (plural mongooses)
moustache ° Amer. mustache
mouth (verb) ° not mouthe
mucous (adjective)
mucus (noun)
Muhammad
murky
Muslim ° not Moslem
naive, navety
naught nothing
neglige
negligible
net not subject to deduction
nonet
nonsuch unrivalled person or thing
no one nobody
nought the figure zero
numskull
nurseling ° Amer. nursling

O (interjection) used to form a vocative (O Caesar) and when not separated by punctuation from what follows (O for the wings of a dove)
octet
° of: not to be written instead of have in such constructions as "Did you go?" "I would have if it hadn't rained."
omelette
on to ° not onto
orangeade
Orangeism
orang-utan
outcast person cast out
outcaste (India) person with no caste
ouzel
oyez!
paediatric
palaeo- (prefix = ancient)
palate roof of mouth
palette artist's board
pallet mattress, part of machine, organ valve, platform for loads
pallor
panda animal
pander pimp; to gratify
panellist ° Amer. panelist
paraffin
parakeet
parallel, paralleled, paralleling
partisan
pasha
pastel (crayon)
pastille
pavior
pawpaw (fruit) ° not papaw
pedal (noun) foot lever (verb) operate pedal
peddle follow occupation of pedlar; trifle
pederast
pedigreed
pedlar vendor of small wares ° Amer. peddler
peen (verb) strike with pein
peewit
pein of hammer
Pekingese dog, inhabitant of Peking ° not Pekinese
peninsula (noun)
peninsular (adjective)
pennant (nautical) piece of rigging, flag
pennon (military) long narrow flag
phone (informal) telephone ° not 'phone
phoney
pi pious
pidgin simplified language
pie jumbled type
piebald
pigeon bird; not one's pigeon not one's affair
piggy back ° not pick-a-back
pi-jaw
pilaff ° not pilau, pilaw

pimento ° not pimiento
plane (informal) aeroplane ° not 'plane
plenitude ° not plentitude
plimsoll (shoe) ° not plimsole
plough ° Amer. plow
pommel knob, saddle-bow
poppadam
postilion
powwow
predacious ° not predaceous
predominant(ly) ° not predominate(ly)
premise (verb) to say as introduction
premises (plural noun) foregoing matters, building
premiss (in logic) proposition
primeval
principal chief
principle fundamental truth, moral basis
prise force open
Prive Council
Privy Counsellor
program (in computing) ° Amer. in all senses
programme (general)
proletariat
promoter
pukka
pummel pound with fists
pupillage
putt (in golf)
pyjamas ° Amer. pajamas
quadrAPHony, quadrophonic ° not quadri- or quadro-
quartet
quatercentenary ° not quarter-
questionnaire
quintet
rabbet groove in woodwork (also rebate)
racket (for ball games) ° not racquet
rackets game
racoön ° not raccoon
radical (chemistry)
radicle (botany)
raja ° not rajah
rarity
rattan plant, cane (also rotan)
raze ° not rase
razzmatazz
recce (slang) reconnaissance
recompense
Renaissance ° not Renascence
renege ° not renegue
repairable (of material) able to be repaired
reparable (of loss) able to be made good
reverend (deserving reverence; title of clergy)
reverent (showing reverence)
review survey, reconsideration, report
revue musical entertainment

rhyme ° not rime
riband (sport, heraldry)
ribbon
rigor (medical) shivering-fit
rigour severity
Riley (slang: the life of Riley)
rill stream
rille (on moon)
rime frost
rogues' gallery
role (no accent)
roly-poly
Romania
rule the roost ° not roast
rumba ° not rhumba
saccharin (adjective)
salutary beneficial
salutatory welcoming
sanatorium ° Amer. sanitarium
Sanhedrin
satire literary work
satiric(al) of satire
satyr woodland deity
satyric of Greek drama with satyrs
savannah
scallop ° not scollop
scallywag ° Amer. scalawag
sceptic ° Amer. skeptic
scrimmage tussle ° also term in Amer. football
scrummage (Rugby)
sear to scorch, wither(ed)
secrecy
seigneur feudal lord
seigneurial of a seigneur
seigniorship lordship
selvage
septet
sere catch of gun-lock; term in ecology
sergeant (military, police)
serjeant (law)
sestet (in a sonnet)
° sett (noun): use set
sextet (in music, etc.)
Shakespearian
shanty hut, song
sheath (noun)
sheathe (verb)
sheikh
shemozzle rumpus
sherif Muslim leader
sheriff county officer
show ° not shew
sibylline
Sinhalse
slew turn ° not slue

smart Alec
smooth (adjective and verb) ° not smoothe
sobriquet
somersault
some time (come and see me some time)
sometime former, formerly
spirituel (masculine and feminine) having refinement of mind
spurt
squirearchy
stanch (verb) stop a flow
State (capital S for the political unit)
stationary (adjective) at rest
stationery (noun) paper, etc.
staunch loyal
stoep (South Africa) veranda
storey division of building ° Amer. story
storeyed having storeys
storied celebrated in story
stoup for holy water, etc.
straight without curve
strait narrow
sty for pigs; swelling on eyelid ° not stye
subsidiary
sulphur ° Amer. sulfur
sumac
summons (noun) a command to appear (plural summonses)
summons (verb) issue a summons (inflected summonsed)
swap ° not swop
sycamine, sycamore (Biblical trees)
sycamore (member of maple genus)
syllabication ° not syllabification
synthesist, synthesize ° not synthet-
teasel (plant)
teetotalism
teetotaller
tehee (laugh)
tell (archaeology)
template ° not templet
tetchy
thank you ° not thankyou
tic contraction of muscles
tick-tack semaphorre
titbit ° Amer. tidbit
titillate excite
titivate smarten up
today
tomorrow
tonight
tonsillar, tonsillitis
t'other
toupee
Trades Union Congress
trade union
traipse trudge ° not trapes
tranquil

tranquillity, tranquillize
transferable
tranship(ment)
transonic
transsexual
trolley
troop assembly of soldiers
trooper member of troop
troupe company of performers
trouper member of troupe
tsar
Turco- (combining form of Turkish)
tympanum ear-drum
'un (informal for one)
underlie, underlying
unequivocal, -ally ° not unequivocable, -ably
valance curtain, drapery
valence (in chemistry)
Vandyke beard, brown
veld
vendor
veranda
vermillion
vice tool ° Amer. vise
villain evil-doer
villein serf
visor ° not vizor
wagon
waiver forgoing of legal right
warrior
wastable
waver be unsteady
way: under way not ° under weigh
whiskey (Irish)
whisky (Scotch)
Whit Monday, Sunday
Whitsunday (Scottish; not a Sunday)
whiz
whooping cough
who's who is
whose of whom
wistaria ° not wisteria
withhold
woeful ° not woful
wrath anger
wreath (noun)
wreathe (verb)
wroth angry
yoghurt

2.0 Pronunciation

For one thing, you speak quite differently from Roy. Now mind you, I'm not saying that one kind of voice is better than another kind, although ...the B. B. C. seems to have very definite views on the subject.
(Marghanita Laski, *The Village*)

This section aims at resolving the uncertainty felt by many speakers both about some of the general variations in the pronunciation of English, and about a large number of individual words whose pronunciation is variable.

Accordingly, the section is in two parts: A, general points of pronunciation, and B, a list of preferred pronunciations.

The aim of recommending one type of pronunciation rather than another, or of giving a word a recommended spoken form, naturally implies the existence of a standard. There are of course many varieties of English, even within the limits of the British Isles, but it is not the business of this section to describe them. The treatment here is based upon Received Pronunciation (RP), namely "the pronunciation of that variety of British English widely considered to be least regional, being originally that used by educated speakers in southern England". (1) This is not to suggest that other varieties are inferior; rather, RP is here taken as a neutral national standard, just as it is in its use in broadcasting or in the teaching of English as a foreign language.

(1) A Supplement to the OED, Volume 3

2.1 A. General points of pronunciation

This first part of Pronunciation is concerned with general variations and uncertainties in pronunciation. Even when RP alone is taken as the model, it is impossible to lay down a set of rules that will establish the correct pronunciation of every word and hold it constant, since pronunciation is continually changing. Some changes affect a particular sound in its every occurrence throughout the vocabulary, while others occur only in the environment of a few other sounds. Some changes occur gradually and imperceptibly; some are limited to a section of the community. At any time there is bound to be considerable variation in pronunciation. One of the purposes of the entries that follow is to draw attention to such variation and to indicate the degree of acceptability of each variant in standard English. Uncertainty about pronunciation also arises from the irregularity of English spelling. It is all too often impossible to guess how a particular letter or group of letters in an unfamiliar word should be pronounced. Broadly speaking, there are particular letters and letter sequences which repeatedly cause such uncertainty (e. g. g (hard and soft); final -ed; final -ade). To settle these uncertainties is the other main purpose of the entries that follow.

The entries are arranged in alphabetical order of heading; the headings are not, of course, complete words, but are either individual letters of the alphabet or sequences of letters making up parts (usually the beginnings or endings) of words. Some entries cover sounds that are spelt in various ways: the heading given is the typical spelling. There are also three entries of a different sort: they deal with (a) the main distinguishing features of American pronunciation, (b) the reduction of common words in rapid speech, and (c) patterns of stress.

2.2 a

1. There is variation in the pronunciation of a between the sound heard in *calm*, *father* and that heard in *cat*, *fan*, in

a. the suffix -graph (in *photograph*, *telegraph*, etc.) and

b. the prefix trans- (as in *transfer*, *translate*, etc.).

a. In -graph, a as in *calm* seems to be the more generally acceptable form in RP. Note that when the suffix—ic is added (e. g. in *photographic*), only a as in *cat* can be used.

b. In trans-, either kind of a is acceptable.

2. The word endings -ada, -ade, and -ado occasion difficulty, since in some words the pronunciation of the a is as in calm, in others as in made.

a. In -ada words, a is as in calm, e. g. armada, cicada.

b. In most -ade words, a is as in made, e. g. accolade, barricade, cavalcade.

Exceptions: a as in calm in

aubade	fasade	roulade
ballade	pomade	saccade
charade	promenade	

and in unassimilated loan-words from French, e. g. d.gringolade, oeillade.

c. In most -ado words, a is as in calm, e. g.

aficionado	bravado
amontillado	desperado
avocado	Mikado

Exceptions: a as in made in bastinado, gambado, tornado.

3. a in the word-ending -alia is like a in alien, e. g. in marginalia, pastoralia, penetralia.

4. a before ls and lt in many words is pronounced either like aw in bawl or o in doll, e. g. in

alter	halt	salt
false	palsy	waltz

The same variation occurs with au in fault, vault. Note: in several words a before ls and lt can only be pronounced like a in sally, e. g.

Alsation	altruism	salsify
alter ego	caltrop	saltation

5. The word endings -ata, -atum, and -atus occasion difficulty. In most words the a is pronounced as in mate, e. g. in

apparatus	flatus
datum (plural data)	hiatus
desideratum (plural desiderata)	meatus ultimatum

Exceptions: cantata, erratum, sonata, toccata with a as in calm; stratum, stratus with a as in mate or as in calm.

2.3 -age

The standard pronunciation of the following words of French origin ending in -age is with stress on the first syllable, a as in calm, and g as in regime.

barrage	fuselage	mirage
camouflage	garage	montage
dressage	massage	sabotage

Note that collage is stressed on the second syllable.

° The pronunciation of -age as in cabbage in any of these words is non-standard. The placing of the stress on the final syllable in some of these words is a feature of Amer. pronunciation.

The substitution of the sound of g as in large for that in regime by some speakers in several of these words is acceptable.

2.4 American pronunciation

Where the Amer. pronunciation of individual forms and words significantly differs from the British, this is indicated as part of the individual entries in this Section. There remain certain constant features of "General American" (2) pronunciation that, being generally distributed, are not worth noting for every word or form in which they occur. The principal features are these:

1. r is sounded wherever it is written, i. e. after vowels finally and before consonants, as well as before vowels, e. g. in burn, car, form.

2. The sound of l is "dark" (as in British bell, fill) everywhere; the British sound of l as in land, light is not used.

3. (t)t between vowels sounds like d (and this d often sounds like a kind of r), e. g. in latter, ladder, tomato.
 4. The vowel of boat, dote, know, no, etc. is a pure long vowel, not a diphthong as in British English.
 5. Where British English has four vowels, (i) a as in bat, (ii) ah as in dance, father, (iii) o as in hot, long, and (iv) aw as in law, Amer. English has only three, differently distributed, viz.: (i) a as in bat, dance, (ii) ah as in father, hot, and (iii) aw as in long, law.
 6. The sound of you (spelt u, ew, etc.) after s, t, d, n, is replaced by the sound of oo, e. g. in resume, Tuesday, due, new, etc.
 7. The sound of u as in up (also spelt o in come, etc.) sounds like the obscure sound of a as in aloft, china.
 8. er is pronounced as in herd in words where it is like ar in hard in British English, e. g. in clerk, derby.
 9. The vowels in the first syllables of (a) ferry, herald, merry, etc., (b) fairy, hairy, Mary, etc., and (c) carry, Harry, marry, etc. (i. e. when r follows) are not distinguished from one another by most General American speakers.
 10. In words of four syllables and over, in which the main stress falls on the first or second syllable, there is a strong secondary stress on the last syllable but one, the vowel of which is fully enunciated, not reduced as in British English, e. g. contemplative, temporary, territory.
- (2) "A form of U. S. speech without marked dialectal or regional characteristics" (A Supplement to the OED, Volume 1).

2.5 -arily

In a few adverbs that end in the sequence -arily there is a tendency to place the stress on the a rather than the first syllable of the word. The reason lies in the stress pattern of four- and five-syllable words.

Adjectives of four syllables ending in -ary which are stressed on the first syllable are generally pronounced with elision of one of the middle syllables, e. g. military, necessary, temporary pronounced milit'ry, necess'ry, temp'rary. This trisyllabic pattern is much easier to pronounce.

The addition of the adverbial suffix -ly converts the word back into an unwieldy tetrasyllable that cannot be further elided: milit(a)rily, necess(a)rily, temp(o)rarily. Hence the use of these adverbs is sometimes avoided by saying in a military fashion, in a solitary way, etc.

A number of these adverbs are, however, in common use, e. g.

arbitrarily	necessarily	temporarily
ordinarily	momentarily	voluntarily

Because of the awkwardness of placing the stress on the first syllable, colloquial speech has adopted a pronunciation with stress on the third syllable, with the a sounding like e in verily. This is probably a borrowing from Amer. English, in which this pronunciation problem does not arise. In adjectives like necessary the ending -ary quite regularly receives a secondary stress (see "American pronunciation" in topic 2.4 above), which can then be converted into a main stress when -ly is added.

This pronunciation is much easier and more natural in rapid, colloquial speech, in which it would be pedantic to censure it.

° In formal and careful speech, the standard pronunciation of arbitrarily, momentarily, necessarily, ordinarily, temporarily, and voluntarily is with stress on the first syllable.

The case of the word primarily is somewhat different. It contains only four syllables, which, with stress on the first, can be reduced by elision of the second syllable to the easily pronounced spoken form prim'rily.

° There is therefore no need to pronounce the word with stress on the second syllable, pri-merr-ily, or even worse, pri-marr-ily. These are widely unacceptable.

2.6 -ed

1. In the following adjectives the ending -ed is pronounced as a separate syllable:

accursed	naked	wicked
cragged	rugged	wretched
deuced	sacred	

Note deuced can also be pronounced as one syllable.

2. The following words represent two different spoken forms each with meanings that differ according to whether -ed is pronounced as a separate syllable or not. In most cases the former pronunciation indicates an adjective (as with the list under 1 above), the latter the past tense and past participle of a verb, but some are more complicated.

	(a) -ed as separate syllable = very old (he is very aged, an aged man)	(b) -ed pronounced 'd = having the age of (one, etc.) (he is aged three, a boy aged three); past of to age (he has aged greatly)
aged		
beloved	used before noun (beloved brethren); = beloved person (my beloved is mine)	used as predicate (he was beloved by all)
blessed	= fortunate, holy, sacred (blessed are the meek, the blessed saints); = blessed person (Isles of the blessed)	part of to bless; sometimes also in senses listed in left-hand column
crabbed	= cross-grained, hard to follow, etc.	past of to crab
crooked	= not straight, dishonest	= having a transverse handle (crooked stick); past of to crook
cursed	before noun = damnable	past of to curse
dogged	= tenacious	past of to dog
jagged	= indented	past of to jag
learned	= erudite	past of to learn (usually learnt)
ragged	= rough, torn, etc.	past of to rag

2.7 -edly, -edness

When the further suffixes -ly (forming adverbs) and -ness (forming nouns) are added to adjectives ending in the suffix -ed, an uncertainty arises about whether to pronounce this -ed- as a separate syllable or not. The adjectives to which these suffixes are added can be divided into three kinds.

1. Those in which -ed is already a separate syllable (a) because it is preceded by d or t or (b) because the adjective is one of those discussed in the entry for -ed above; e. g. belated, decided, excited levelheaded, wicked. When both -ly and -ness are added, -ed- remains a separate syllable, e. g. (i) belatedly, decidedly, excitedly, wickedly; (ii) belatedness, levelheadedness, wickedness.

2. Those in which the syllable preceding -ed is unstressed, i. e. if -(e)d is removed the word ends in an unstressed syllable; e. g. bad-tempered, embarrassed, hurried, self-centred. When both -ly and -ness are added, -ed- remains non-syllabic (i. e. it sounds like 'd), e. g.

(i) abandonedly	frenziedly	old-fashionedly
bad-temperedly	good-humouredly	self-centredly
biasedly	hurriedly	shamefacedly
dignifiedly	ill-naturedly	worriedly
embarrassedly		
(ii) bad-tempered-ness	selfcentredness (= -center'dness)	
hurriedness	shamefacedness	

3. Those in which the syllable preceding -ed is stressed, i. e. if -(e)d is removed the word ends in a stressed syllable, or is a monosyllable, e. g. assured, fixed.

° (i) When -ly is added -ed becomes an extra syllable, e. g.

advisedly	declaredly	professedly
allegedly	deservedly	resignedly
amusedly	designedly	surprisedly
assuredly	displeasedly	undisguisedly
avowedly	fixedly	unfeignedly
constrainedly	markedly	unreservedly

Exceptions:

There are a few definite exceptions to this rule, e. g. subduedly, tiredly (ed is not a separate syllable). There are also several words in which variation is found, e. g. confessedly, depravedly, depressedly (three or four syllables according to OED); inspiredly (four syllables in OED, but now probably three).

° Note that some adverbs formed on adjectives in -ed sound awkward and ugly whether -ed- is pronounced as a separate syllable or not. Because of this, some authorities (e. g. MEU) discourage the formation of words like boredly, charmedly, discouragedly, experiencedly.

(ii) When -ness is added, there is greater variation. The older usage seems to have been to make -ed- an extra syllable. In OED the following are so marked:

absorbedness	estrangedness	forcedness
assuredness	exposedness	markedness
confirmedness	fixedness	surprisedness

The following have ed or 'd as alternative pronunciation:

ashamedness	pleasedness
detachedness	preparedness

But 'd is the only pronunciation in blurredness, subduedness. However, many other words are not specially marked, and it seems likely that it has become increasingly rare for -ed- to be separately sounded.

It is acceptable not to make -ed- a separate syllable in words of this type.

2.8 -ein(e)

The ending -ein(e) (originally disyllabic) is now usually pronounced like -ene in polythene in

caffeine	codeine	casein	protein
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2.9 -eity

The traditional pronunciation of e in this termination is as in me, e. g. in

contemporaneity	heterogeneity	spontaneity
corporeity	homogeneity	velleity
deity	simultaneity	

Among younger speakers there is a marked tendency to substitute the sound of e in cafe, suede. The reasons for this are probably:

1. The difficulty of making the sounds of e (as in me) and i distinct when they come together. Cf. the words rabies, species, protein, etc. in which e and i were originally separate syllables but have now fused. Because of this difficulty, many users of the traditional pronunciation of e actually make the first two syllables of deity sound like deer, and so with the other words.

2.13 h

1. Initial h is silent in heir, honest, honour, hour, and their derivatives; also in honorarium. It is sounded in habitue.
2. Initial h used commonly to be silent if the first syllable was unstressed, as in habitual, hereditary, historic, hotel. This pronunciation is now old-fashioned. (see "a or an" in topic 1.8.)

2.14 -ies

The ending -ies is usually pronounced as one syllable (like ies in diesel) in:

caries	rabies	series
congeries	scabies	species
facies		

° The reduction of this ending to a sound like the ending of the plural words armies, babies, etc., is best avoided.

2.15 -ile

The ending -ile is normally pronounced like isle, e. g. in

docile	fertile	sterile
domicile	missile	virile

° The usual Amer. pronunciation in most words of this kind is with the sound of il in daffodil or pencil.

The pronunciation is like eel in:

automobile	-mobile (suffix)
imbecile	

-ile forms two syllables in campanile (rhyming with Ely), cantabile (pronounced can-tah-bi-ly), and sal volatile (rhyming with philately).

2.16 ng

There is a distinction in Standard English between ng representing a single sound (which is represented by n alone before c, k, q, and x, as in zinc, ink, tranquil, and lynx) and ng representing a compound consisting of this sound followed by the sound of hard g.

1. The single sound is the only one to occur at the end of a word, e. g. in

bring	furlong	song	writing
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2. The single sound also occurs in the middle of words, but usually in words that are a compound of a word ending in -ng (as in 1 above) + a suffix, e. g.

bringer	kingly	stringy
bringing	longish	wrongful
hanged	singable	

3. The compound sound, ng + g, is otherwise normal in the middle of words, e. g.

anger	language
hungry	singly

And exceptionally, according to rule 2, in diphthongize, longer, -est, prolongation, stronger, -est, younger, -est. °

4. It is non-standard:

- a. To use -in for -ing (suffix), i. e. to pronounce bringing, writing as bringin, writin.

- b. To use n for ng in length, strength. (The pronunciation lenkth, strenkth is acceptable.)

- c. To use nk for ng in anything, everything, nothing, something.

- d. To use the compound sound ng + g in all cases of ng, i. e. in words covered by rules 1 and 2 as well as 3. This pronunciation is, however, normal in certain regional forms of English.

2.17 o

1. In many words the sound normally represented in English by u as in butter, sun is written instead with o, e. g. above, come, front. There are a few words in which there is variation in pronunciation between the above sound (as in come, etc.) and the more usual

sound of o (as in body, lot, etc.) The earlier pronunciation of most of these was with the u-sound; the o-sound was introduced under the influence of the spelling.

a. More usually with the u-sound:

accomplice	frontier	pommel
accomplish	mongrel	

b. More usually with the o-sound:

combat	hovel	pomegranate
conduit	hover	sojourn
dromedary		

c. Still variable (either is acceptable):

comrade	constable
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2. Before ff, ft, ss, st, and th, in certain words, there was formerly a variety of RP in which o was pronounced like aw in law or oa in broad, so that off often, cross, lost, and cloth sounded like orf, orphan, etc.

° This pronunciation is now non-standard.

3. Before double ll, o has the long sound (as in pole) in some words, and the short sound (as in Polly) in others.

a. With the long sound:

boll	roll	toll
droll	scroll	troll
knoll	stroll	wholly
poll	swollen	

b. With the short sound: doll, loll, and most words in which another syllable follows, e. g. collar, holly, etc.

4. Before lt, o is pronounced long, as in pole, e. g. bolt, colt, molten, revolt.

° The substitution of short o, as in doll, in these words is non-standard.

5. Before lv, o is pronounced short, as in doll, e. g.

absolve	evolve	revolve
devolve	involve	revolver
dissolve	resolve	solve

° The substitution of long o, as in pole, in these words is non-standard.

2.18 ough

Difficult though this spelling is for foreign learners, most words in which it occurs are familiar to the ordinary English speaker.

Pronunciation difficulties may arise, however, with the following words:

brougham	(a kind of carriage) broo-am or broom
chough	(bird) chuff
clough	(ravine) cluff
hough	(animal's joint), same as, and sounds like, hock
slough	(bog) rhymes with plough
slough	(snake's skin) sluff sough (sound)
suff	(can also rhyme with plough)

2.19 phth

This sequence should sound like fth (in fifth, twelfth), e. g. in diphtheria, dipthong, monophthong, naphtha, ophthalmic.

° It is non-standard to pronounce these as if written dip-theria, etc.

Initially, as in the words phthisical, phthisis, the ph can be silent; it is also usually silent in apophthegm.

2.20 pn-, ps-, pt-

These sequences occur at the beginning of many words taken from Greek. In all of them it is normal not to pronounce the initial p-. The exception is psi representing the name of a Greek letter, used, e. g., as a symbol.

2.21 r

1. When r is the last letter of a word (always following a vowel, or another r) or precedes "silent" final e (where it may follow a consonant, e. g. in acre which really = aker), it is normally silent in RP, e. g. in

aware	four	pure
err	here	runner
far	kilometre	

But when another word, beginning with a vowel sound, follows in the same sentence, it is normal to pronounce the final r, e. g. in

aware of it
four hours
pure air
to err is human
here it is
runner –up
far away
a kilometre of track

This is called the "linking r".

° It is standard to use linking r and unnatural to try to avoid it.

2. A closely connected feature of the spoken language is what is called "intrusive r".

a. The commonest occurrence of this is when a word ending with the obscure sound of a, as china, comma, Jonah, loofah, etc. is immediately followed by a word beginning with a vowel sound. An intrusive r is added to the end of the first word as if it were spelt with -er so as to ease the passage from one word to the next.

Typical examples are:

the area-r of the island	an umbrella-r
the pasta-r is cooked	organization
sonata-r in E flat	a villa-r in Italy

Here the sound spelt -a at the end of area, pasta, etc., which sounds the same as -er, -re at the end of runner, kilometre, is treated as if it were spelt with an r following.

b. In the same way, some speakers unconsciously equate (i) the spelling a or ah in grandma, Shah with the identical-sounding ar in far, (ii) the spelling aw in law, draw with the similar our in four or ore in bore, tore, and (iii) the spelling eu in milieu, cordon bleu with the similar er(r) in err, prefer. Thus, just as linking r is used with far, four, bore, tore, err, and prefer, such speakers introduce an intrusive r in, e. g.

is grandma-r at home?	a milieu-r in
The Shah-r of Iran	which...
draw-r a picture	a cordon bleu-r
law-r and order	in the kitchen

c. Intrusive r is often introduced before inflexional endings, e. g.

The boys are keen on scubering (i. e. scubaing) (Berkely Mather)
oohing and ah-r-ing
draw-r-ing room
and even within the word withdraw-r-al.

d. Intrusive r has been noted since the end of the eighteenth century. In the mid-nineteenth century it was regarded as unpardonable in an educated person, but acknowledged to occur widely even among the cultivated.

Its use after obscure a (as described under 2a above), where it greatly aids the flow of the sentence and is relatively unobtrusive, is acceptable in rapid, informal speech. The avoidance of intrusive r here by the insertion of a hiatus or a catch in the breath would sound affected and pedantic.

° The use of intrusive r after the sounds of ah, aw, and eu (described under 2b) is very widely unacceptable and should be avoided if possible. Its use before inflexional endings (2c above) is illiterate or jocular.

° In formal speech, the use of intrusive r in any context conveys an impression of unsuitable carelessness and should not be used at all.

3. There is a tendency in certain words to drop r if it is closely followed (or in a few cases, preceded) by another r at the beginning of an unstressed syllable, e. g. in

deteriorate mispronounced deteriate

February mispronounced Febuary

honorary mispronounced honary (prefer hon'rary)

itinerary mispronounced itinery

library mispronounced lib'ry

secretary mispronounced seketry or seketerry

temporary mispronounced tempary (prefer temp'rary)

° This pronunciation should be avoided, especially in formal speech.

2.22 reduced forms

In rapid speech, many of the shorter words whose function is essentially grammatical rather than lexical, being lightly stressed, tend to be reduced either by the obscuring of their vowels or the loss of a consonant or both. They may even be attached to one another or to more prominent words. Similarly, some words such as pronouns and auxiliary verbs are in rapid speech omitted altogether, while longer words of frequent occurrence are shortened by the elision of unstressed syllables. Typical examples are:

gunna, wanna = going to, want to

kinda, sorta = kind of, sort of

gimme, lemme = give me, let me

'snot = it's not

innit, wannit = isn't it, wasn't it

doncha dunno = don't you, I don't know

what's he say, where d'you find it, we done it, what you want it for?

'spect or I'xpect = I expect

(I) spose = I suppose

cos, course, on'y, praps, probly = because, of course, only, perhaps, probably

° Most of these reduced forms (with the possible exception of innit, wannit) are natural in informal RP, but severely mar the quality and clarity of careful and prepared discourse, where they should be avoided.

2.23 s, sh, z and zh

In certain kinds of word, where the spelling is ci, si, or ti, or where it is s before long u, there is variation between two or more of the four sounds which may be phonetically represented as:

s as in sun

sh as in ship

z as in zone

zh representing the

sound of s in leisure

or g in regime

1. There is variation between s and sh in words such as:

appreciate

appreciation

associate

association

negotiate

negotiation

sociology

This variation does not occur in all words with a similar structure: only s is used in glaciation, pronunciation (see-ay-shon), and only sh in partiality (par-shee-al-ity). Note that there can be a variant having the sound of s only with words in which the following i constitutes a separate syllable; hence only sh occurs in initial, racial, sociable, spatial, special, etc. It is possible that speakers avoid using sh in words that end in -tion, which also contains the sh— sound, so as to prevent the occurrence of this sound in adjacent syllables, e. g. in appreciation = appreshi-ashon.

2. There is variation between s and sh in sensual, sexual, issue, tissue, and between z and zh in casual, casuist, visual.

3. There is variation between sh and rh in aversion, equation, immersion, transition, version.

Either variant is acceptable in each of these kinds of word, although in all of them sh is the traditional pronunciation.

4. In the names of some countries and regions ending in -sia, and in the adjectives derived from them, there is variation between sh and zh, and in some cases z and s as well. So:

Asian = A-shan or A-zhan

Asiatic = A-shi-at-ic or A-zhi-at-ic or A-zi-at-ic or A-si-at-ic

Friesian = Free-zi-an or Free-zhan

Indonesian = Indo-nee-shan or -zhan or -zi-an or -si-an

Persian = Per-shan or Per-zhan

Polynesian (varies like Indonesian)

Rhodesian = Ro-dee-shan or -zhan or -zi-an or -si-an

° In all except Friesian the pronunciation with sh is traditional in RP and therefore the most widely acceptable. The pronunciation with zh is also generally acceptable.

2.24 stress

1. The position of the stress accent is the key to the pronunciation of many English polysyllabic words. If it is known on which syllable the stress falls, it is very often possible to deduce the pronunciation of the vowels. This is largely because the vowels of unstressed syllables in English are subject to reduction in length, obscuration of quality, and, quite often, complete elision. Compare the sound of the vowel in the stressed syllable in the words on the left with that of the vowel in the same syllable, unstressed, in the related words on the right:

a: humanity	human
monarchic	monarch
practicality	practically(ic'ly)
secretarial	secretary(-try)
e: present (verb)	present (noun)
protest	protest tion
mysterious	mystery (=myst'ry)
i: satirical	satirist
combine	combination
anxiety	anxious (=anksh'ous)
o: economy	economic
oppose	opposite
historic	history (=hist'ry)
u: luxurious	luxury
industrial	industry

Because the position of the stress has such an important effect on the phonetic shape of the word, it is not surprising that many of the most hotly disputed questions of pronunciation centre on the placing of the stress. For example, in controversy, stress on the first syllable causes the four vowels to sound like those of collar turning, while stress on the second causes them to sound like those of an opposite: two quite different sequences of vowels.

2. It is impossible to formulate rules accounting for the position of the stress in every English word, whether by reference to the spelling or on the basis of grammatical function. If it were, most of the controversies about pronunciation could be cleared up overnight.

Instead, three very general observations can be made.

a. Within very broad limits, the stress can fall on any syllable.

These limits are roughly defined by the statement that more than three unstressed syllables cannot easily be uttered in sequence.

Hence, for example, five-syllable words with stress on the first or last syllable are rare. Very often in polysyllabic words at least one syllable besides the main stressed syllable bears a medium or secondary stress, e. g. c terp llar, c ntrov rtib lity.

b. Although there is such fluidity in the occurrence of stress, some patterns of stress are clearly associated with some patterns of spelling or with grammatical function (or, especially, with variation of grammatical function in a single word). For example, almost all words ending in the suffixes -ic and -ical are stressed on the syllable immediately preceding the suffix. There is only a handful of exceptions: Arabic, arithmetic (noun), arsenic, catholic, choleric, heretic, lunatic, politic(s), rhetoric.

c. If the recent and current changes and variations in stress in a large number of words are categorized, a small number of general tendencies can be discerned. Most of these can be ascribed to the influence exerted by the existing fixed stress patterns over other words (many of which may conform to other existing patterns of stress). It will be the purpose of the remaining part of this entry to describe some of these tendencies and to relate them to the existing canons of acceptability.

3. Two-syllable words

While there is no general rule that says which syllable the stress will fall on, there is a fixed pattern to which quite a large number of words conform, by which nouns and adjectives are stressed on the first syllable, and verbs on the second.

A large number of words beginning with a (Latin) prefix have stress on the first syllable if they are nouns or adjectives, but on the second if they are verbs, e. g.

accent	import	transfer
compound	present	transport
conflict	suspect	

The same distinction is made in some words ending in -ment, e. g.

ferment	segment
fragment	torment

And words ending in -ate with stress on the first syllable are usually nouns, while those with stress on the second are mainly verbs, e. g.

nouns: climate	verbs: create	curate	dictate	dictate	frustrate	mandate	vacate
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This pattern has recently exercised an influence over several other words not originally conforming to it. The words

ally	defect	rampage
combine	intern	

were all originally stressed on the second syllable; as verbs, they still are, but as nouns, they are all usually stressed on the first.

Exactly the same tendency has affected

dispute	research	recess	romance
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but in these words, the pronunciation of the noun with stress on the first syllable is rejected in good usage. The following nouns and adjectives (not corresponding to identically spelt verbs) show the same transference of stress: adept, adult, chagrin, supine.

In the verbs combat, contact, harass, and traverse, originally stressed on the first syllable, a tendency towards stress on the second syllable is discernible, but the new stress has been accepted only in the word traverse.

4. Three-syllable words

Of the three possible stress patterns in three-syllable words, that with stress on the first syllable is the strongest and best-established, exercising an influence over words conforming to the other two patterns.

a. Words with stress on the final syllable are relatively rare. A number of them have been attracted to the dominant pattern; in some this pattern (stress on the first syllable) is acceptable in RP, e. g. artisan, commandant, confidant, partisan, promenade; in others it is not, e. g. cigarette, magazine.

b. Many words originally having stress on the second syllable now normally or commonly have stress on the first, e. g.

abdomen	decorous	recondite
acumen	obdurate	remonstrate

albumen	precedence	secretive
aspirant	precedent	sonorous
communal	(noun)	subsidence
composite	quandary	vagary

Other words are also affected by this tendency, but the pronunciation with stress on the first syllable has not been accepted as standard, e. g. in

Byzantine	contribute
clandestine	distribute

Note: This tendency to move the stress back from the second to the first syllable of three-syllable words has been observed for at least a century. A case that typically illustrates it is the word *sonorous*. In 1884 W. W. Skeat, in his *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (edn. 2), wrote: "Properly *son rous*; it will probably, sooner or later, become *s norous*." The first dictionary to recognize the change was Webster's *New International* of 1909, which adds the newer pronunciation with the comment "now often, esp. in British usage". Fifty years after Skeat, G. B. Shaw wrote to *The Times* (2 Jan. 1934): "An announcer who pronounced *decadent* and *sonorous* as *dekkadent* and *sonnerus* would provoke Providence to strike him dumb"—testifying both to the prevalence of the new pronunciation and to the opposition it aroused. In 1956 Compton Mackenzie, in an Oxford Union Debate, protested against the pronunciation of *quandary*, *sonorous*, and *decorous* with stress on the first syllable (B. Foster, *The Changing English Language*, 1968, p. 243). Foster (*ibid.*), however, records his surprise in about 1935 at hearing a schoolmaster use the older pronunciation of *sonorous*. The newer pronunciation was first mentioned in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* in 1964; the two pronunciations are both heard, but the newer one probably now prevails.

c. There is a tendency in a few words to move the stress from the first to the second syllable. It is generally resisted in standard usage, e. g. in

combatant	exquisite	urinal
deficit	stigmata	

all of which have stress on the first syllable. But it has prevailed in *aggrandize*, *chastisement*, *conversant*, *doctrinal*, *environs*, *pariah*.

5. Four-syllable words

In a very large group of four-syllable words there is a clash between two opposing tendencies. One is the impulse to place the stress on the first syllable; the other is the influence of antepenultimate stress which is so prevalent in three-syllable words. Broadly speaking, it has been traditional in RP to favour stress on the first syllable, so that the shift to the second syllable has been strongly resisted in:

applicable	demonstrable	intricacy
aristocrat	formidable	kilometre
capitalist	hospitable	lamentable
controversy	illustrative	remediless
contumacy		

In many words the two tendencies can be reconciled by the elision of one of the two middle unstressed syllables:

adversary	necessary	promissory
comparable	participle	referable
migratory	preferable	voluntary
momentary	primarily	

However, many words traditionally stressed on the first syllable have been, or are being, adapted to the antepenultimate stress pattern, e. g.

centenary	hegemony	nomenclature
despicable	metallurgy	pejorative
disputable	miscellany	peremptory
explicable		

Because antepenultimate stress has been accepted in most of these words, it is difficult to reject it in the words in the first list simply on the ground of tradition. Analogy is the obvious argument in some cases, i. e. the analogy of capital, demonstrate, illustrate, intricate, kilocycle (or centimetre), and remedy for the words related to them in the list, but this cannot be used with the remaining words.

6. Five-syllable words

Five-syllable words originally stressed on the first syllable have been affected by the difficulty of uttering more than three unstressed syllables in sequence (see 2a above). The stress has been shifted to the second syllable in laboratory, obligatory, whereas in veterinary the fourth syllable is elided, and usually the second as well. For arbitrarily, momentarily, etc., see “-arily” in topic 2.5.

2.25 t

1. In rapid speech, t is often dropped from the sequence cts, so that acts, ducts, pacts sound like axe, ducks, packs.

° This should be avoided in careful speech.

2. The sounding of t in often is a spelling pronunciation: the traditional form in RP rhymes with soften.

2.26 th

1. Monosyllabic nouns ending in -th after a vowel sound (or vowel + r) form the plural by adding -s in the usual way, but the resulting sequence ths is pronounced in two different ways. In some words It voiceless as in myths, in others voiced as in mouths.

a. The following are like myth:

berth	girth	sleuth
birth	growth	sloth
breath	hearth	(animal)
death	heath	smith
faith	moth	wraith
fourth		

b. The following are like mouth:

bath	sheath	wreath
oath	swath	youth
path	truth	

cloth, lath vary, but are now commonly like myth.

2. Note that final th is like th in bathe, father in:

bequeath	booth
betroth	mouth (verb)

2.27 u

The sound of long u, as in cube, cubic, cue, use is also spelt eu, ew, and ui, as in feud, few, pursuit. It is properly a compound of two sounds, the semi-vowel y followed by the long vowel elsewhere written oo. Hence the word you (=y + oo) sounds like the name of the letter U, ewe, and yew.

When this compound sound follows certain consonants the y is lost, leaving only the oo-sound.

1. Where it follows ch, j, r, and the sound of sh, the y element was lost in the mid-eighteenth century.

So brewed, chews, chute, Jules, rude, sound like brood, choose, shoot, joules, rood.

The y element was also lost at about the same time or a little later where it follows an l preceded by another consonant; so blew, clue, glue, etc. sound as if they were spelt bloo, cloo, gloo, etc.

2. Where this compound sound follows an l not preceded by another consonant, loss of the y-element is now very common in a syllable that bears the main or secondary stress. COD, for instance, gives only the oo pronunciation in many words, e. g. Lewis, Lucifer, lucrative, lucre, etc., and either pronunciation for many others, e. g. lubricate, Lucan, lucid, ludicrous, etc.

It is equally common in internal stressed syllables; in COD the words allude, alluvial, collusion, voluminous, etc. are given both pronunciations. So also in a syllable which bears a secondary stress: absolute, interlude.

In all syllables of these kinds, the oo-sound is probably the predominant type, but either is acceptable.

° In unstressed syllables, however, it is not usual for the y-element to be lost. The yoo-sound is the only one possible in, e. g.

curlew	purlieu	value
deluge	soluble	volume
prelude	valuable	

Contrast solute (= sol-yoot) with salute (= sa-loot).

3. After s, there is again variation between the compound sound and the oo-sound. The latter has now a very strong foothold. Very few people, if any, pronounce Susan and Sue with a yoo, and most people pronounce super (the word and the prefix) with oo. On the other hand, most people probably use yoo in pseudo- and in internal syllables, as in assume, presume, pursue. Common words such as sewage, sewer, suet, suicide, sue, and suit show wide variation: some people pronounce the first four (in which another vowel follows ew or u) with oo, but the last two with yoo.

In an unstressed syllable, the y- sound is kept, as with l in 2 above:

capsule	consular	insulate
chasuble	hirsute	peninsula

Apart from in Susan, Sue, and super, and the words in which the vowel occurs in an unstressed syllable, either pronunciation is acceptable, although yoo is the traditional one.

4. After d, n, t, and th, the loss of the y-sound is non-standard, e. g. in due, new, tune, enthusiasm.

Note: In Amer. English loss of the y-sound is normal after these consonants and l and s.

° The tendency to make t and d preceding this sound in stressed syllables sound like ch and j, e. g. Tuesday, duel as if Choosday, jewel, should be avoided in careful speech. In unstressed syllables (e. g. in picture, procedure) it is normal.

2.28 ul

After b, f, and p, the sequence ul sounds like ool in wool in some words, e. g. in bull, full, pull, and like ull in hull in others, e. g. in bulk, fulminate, pulp. In a few words there is uncertainty about the sound of u, or actual variation.

(a) Normally with u as in hull:

Bulgarian	fulminate	pulmonary
ebullient	pullulate	pulverize
effulgent		

(b) Normally with u as in bull:

bulwark	fulsome	fulmar	fulvous
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(c) With variation: fulcrum

2.29 urr

In Standard English the stressed vowel of furry and occurring is like that of stirring, not that of hurry and occurrence.

° The identity of the two sounds is normal in Amer. English.

2.30 wh

In some regions wh is distinguished from w by being preceded or accompanied by an h-sound.

This pronunciation is not standard in RP, but is acceptable to most RP-speakers.

2.31 B. Preferred pronunciations

The entries in this list are of three kinds. Some of the words in it have only one current pronunciation, which cannot, however, be deduced with certainty from the written form. These are mainly words that are encountered in writing and are not part of the average person's spoken vocabulary. Another class of words included here have a single, universally accepted pronunciation, which, in rapid or careless speech, undergoes a significant slurring or reduction. These reduced forms are noted, with a warning to use the fully enunciated form in careful speech so as to avoid giving an impression of sloppiness or casualness. Much the largest group are words for which two or more different pronunciations exist. Both (or all) are given, with notes giving a rough guide to the currency and acceptability of each.

The approach adopted here is fairly flexible, allowing for the inevitable subjectivity of judgements about pronunciation and the fact that there is variation and inconsistency even in the speech of an individual person.

Where the American pronunciation is significantly different from the British (disregarding the differences that are constant, such as the American pronunciation of r where it is silent in British speech), a note of it has been added, usually in brackets at the end of the entry. In a few cases the American pronunciation stands alone after the recommended one, implying that the use of the American form is incorrect in British speech. It will be found that in many cases the American pronunciation coincides with an older British one that is now being ousted. It is hoped that this will dispel the impression that all innovations are Americanisms, and give a clearer idea of the relationship between the two varieties of English pronunciation.

The symbol _ is used to warn against forms especially to be avoided; _ introduces most of the cases of peaceful coexistence of two variant pronunciations.

abdomen stress on 1st syllable in general use; on 2nd in the speech of many members of the medical profession.

accomplice, accomplish the older (and Amer.) pronunciation has 2nd syllable as in comma; but pronunciation as come is now predominant.

acoustic 2nd syllable as coo, not cow.

acumen stress on 1st syllable.

adept, adult (adjective and noun): stress on 1st syllable.

adversary stress on 1st syllable.

aficionado a-fiss-eon-ah-do.

aggrandize stress on 2nd syllable.

ague 2 syllables.

albumen stress on 1st syllable.

ally (noun): stress on 1st syllable; (verb) on 2nd syllable; allied preceding a noun is stressed on 1st syllable.

analogous g as in log; not a-na-lo-jus.

Antarctic ° do not drop the first c.

anti- (prefix): rhymes with shanty, not, as often Amer., ant eye.

antiquary stress on 1st syllable.

apache (Indian): rhymes with patchy; (street ruffian) rhymes with cash.

apartheid 3rd syllable like hate. ° Not apart-ite or apart-hide.

apophthegm a-po-them.

apparatus 3rd syllable like rate; not appar-ah-tus.

applicable stress on 1st syllable.

opposite 3rd syllable like that of opposite.

arbitrarily stress properly on 1st syllable, in informal speech on 3rd.

Arctic ° do not drop the first c.

Argentine 3rd syllable as in turpentine.
aristocrat stress on 1st syllable. ° Not (except Amer.) a-ris-tocrat.
artisan stress originally on 3rd syllable; pronunciation with stress on 1st syllable is Amer., and now common in Britain.
aspirant stress on 1st syllable.
asthma ass-ma is the familiar pronunciation; to sound the th is didactic (Amer. az-ma).
ate rhymes with bet (Amer. with bate).
audacious au as in audience, not as in gaucho.
auld lang syne 3rd word like sign, not zine.
azure the older pronunciation was with -zure like -sure in pleasure; now usually az-yoor.
banal 2nd syllable like that of canal or morale (Amer. rhymes with anal).
basalt 1st a as in gas, 2nd as in salt; stress on either.
bathos a as in paper.
blackguard blagg-ard.
bolero (dance): stress on 2nd syllable; (jacket) stress on 1st.
booth rhymes with smooth (Amer. with tooth).
bouquet first syllable as book, not as beau.
Bourbon (dynasty): 1st syllable as that of bourgeois; (US whisky) 1st syllable as bur.
breeches rhymes with pitches.
brochure stress on 1st syllable.
brusque should be Anglicized: broosk or brusks.
bureau stress on 1st syllable.
burgh (in Scotland): sounds like borough.
Byzantine stress on 2nd syllable.
cadaver 2nd syllable as in waver.
cadaverous 2nd syllable like 1st of average.
cadre rhymes with harder.
caliph rhymes with bailiff.
camellia rhymes with Amelia.
canine 1st syllable may be as can or cane (the latter probably prevails).
canton (subdivision): 2nd syllable as 1st of tonic; (military, also in cantonment) 2nd syllable as that of cartoon.
capitalist stress on 1st syllable.
carillon rhymes with trillion (Amer. carry-lon).
caryatid stress on 2nd a.
catacomb 3rd syllable, in the older pronunciation, as comb; now frequently rhyming with tomb.
centenary sen-tee-nary (Amer. sen-te-nary).
cento c as in cent, not cello.
centrifugal, centripetal stress originally on 2nd syllable; but pronunciation with stress on 3rd syllable seems to be usual among younger speakers.
certification stress on 1st and 4th syllables, not 2nd and 4th.
cervical stress either on 1st syllable (with last two syllables as in vertical) or on 2nd (rhyming with cycle): both pronunciations have been common for at least a century and a half (Amer. only the first pronunciation).
chaff rhymes with staff.
chagrin stress on 1st syllable; 2nd as grin (Amer. stress on 2nd syllable).
chamois (antelope): sham-wah; (leather) shammy.
chastisement traditionally with stress on 1st syllable; now often on 2nd.
chimera ch = k not sh
chiroprapist strictly ch = k, but pronunciation as sh is common.
choleric 1st two syllables like collar.
cigarette stress on 3rd syllable (Amer. on 1st).
clandestine stress on 2nd syllable.
clangour rhymes with anger.

clientele kleeon-tell.
clique rhymes with leak, not lick.
coccyx cc = ks.
colander 1st syllable as cull.
combat (verb), combatant, -ive: stress on 1st syllable (Amer. on 2nd).
combine (noun): stress on 1st syllable.
commandant stress originally on 3rd syllable; now often on 1st.
communal stress on 1st syllable.
commune (noun): stress on 1st syllable.
comparable stress on 1st syllable, not on 2nd.
compensatory the older (and Amer.) pronunciation has stress on 2nd syllable, but stress on 3rd is now common.
compilation 2nd syllable as pill.
composite stress on 1st syllable; 3rd as that of opposite (Amer. stress on 2nd syllable).
conch originally = conk; now often with ch as in lunch.
conduit last three letters like those of circuit (Amer. con-doo-it).
confidant(e) the older pronunciation has stress on last syllable, which rhymes with ant; stress on 1st syllable is now common.
congener stress on 1st syllable; o as in con; g as in gin.
congeries con-jeer-eez or con-jeer-y-eez.
congratulatory stress on 2nd syllable; pronunciation with stress on 4th syllable is also common.
conjugal stress on 1st syllable.
consuetude stress on 1st syllable; sue like swi in swift.
consummate (adjective): stress on 2nd syllable; (verb) on 1st syllable, 3rd syllable as mate.
contact (noun and verb): stress on 1st syllable.
contemplative stress on 2nd syllable.
contrarily (on the contrary): stress on 1st syllable; (perversely) stress on 2nd syllable.
contribute stress on 2nd syllable. ° The former pronunciation with stress on 1st syllable has survived in dialect and is frequently heard, but is not standard.
controversy stress on 1st syllable. ° The pronunciation with stress on 2nd syllable seems to be increasingly common, but is strongly disapproved by many users of RP.
contumacy stress on 1st syllable (Amer. on 2nd).
contumely 3 syllables with stress on the 1st.
conversant now usually stressed on 2nd syllable; formerly on 1st.
courier ou as in could.
courteous 1st syllable like curt.
courtesan 1st syllable like court.
courtesy 1st syllable like curt.
covert 1st syllable like that of cover. ° Does not rhyme with overt.
culinary cul- now usually as in culprit; formerly as in peculiar.
dais originally one syllable; now only with two.
data 1st syllable as date. ° Does not rhyme with sonata.
decade stress on 1st syllable.
defect (noun): stress on 1st syllable is now usual.
deficit stress on 1st syllable.
deify, deity e as in me. ° Pronunciation with e as in sude, f te is common among younger speakers, but is disapproved of by many users of RP.
delirious 2nd syllable as 1st of lyrical, not Leary.
demesne 2nd syllable sounds like main.
demonstrable stress on 1st syllable.
deprivation 1st two syllables like those of depreciation.
derisive, derisory 2nd syllable like rice.

despicable in formal speech, stress on 1st syllable; informally, especially for greater emphasis, on 2nd.

desuetude as for consuetude.

desultory stress on 1st syllable.

deteriorate ° do not drop 4th syllable, i. e. not deteri-ate.

detour dee-tour not day-tour (Amer. de-tour).

deus ex machina day-us ex mak-ina, not ma-shee-na.

dilemma 1st syllable like dill.

dinghy ding-gy, not rhyming with stringy.

diphtheria, diphthong ph = f not p.

disciplinary the older (and Amer.) pronunciation has stress on 1st syllable, but it is now usually on the 3rd (with i as in pin).

disputable stress on 2nd syllable.

dispute (noun): stress on 2nd syllable, not on 1st.

dissect 1st syllable as Diss. ° Does not rhyme with bisect.

distribute stress on 2nd syllable.

doctrinal the older pronunciation has stress on 1st syllable, but it is now usually on the 2nd (with i as in mine).

dolorous, dolour 1st syllable like doll (Amer. like dole).
dour rhymes with poor not power.

dubiety last 3 syllables like those of anxiety.

ducat 1st syllable like duck.

dynast, dynastic, dynasty 1st syllable like din (Amer. like dine).

ebullient u as in dull, not as in bull.

economic e as in extra or as in equal: both are current.

Edwardian 2nd syllable as ward.

e'er (poetry, = ever): sounds like air.

efficacy stress on 1st syllable, not 2nd.

ego 1st syllable as that of eager.

egocentric, egoism, etc.: 1st syllable like egg (Amer. usually as ego).

either ei as in height or seize: both are widely current (Amer. only the second pronunciation).

elixir rhymes with mixer.

enclave en- as in end, a as in slave.

entirety now usually entire-ety; formerly entire-ty.

envelope en- as in end not on.

environs rhymes with sirens.

epos e as in epic.

epoxy stress on 2nd syllable.

equerry stress properly on 2nd syllable, but commonly on 1st.

espionage now usually with -age as in camouflage.

et cetera etsetera. ° Not eksetera.

explicable stress originally on 1st syllable, but now usually on 2nd.

exquisite stress on 1st syllable.

extraordinary 1st a is silent.

fakir sounds like fake-ear.

falcon a as in talk, not as in alcove.

fascia rhymes with Alsatia.

fascism, fascist 1st syllable like that of fashion.

February ° do not drop the 1st r: feb-roor-y, not feb-yoor-y or feb-wa-ry or feb-yoo-erry (Amer. feb-roo-erry).

fetid, fetish e as in fetter.

fifth in careful speech, do not drop the 2nd f.

finance _ stress on 1st syllable (only with i as in fine) or on 2nd (with i as in fin or fine).

forbade 2nd syllable like bad.

formidable in careful speech, stress on 1st syllable; informally, on 2nd.
forte (one's strong point): originally (and Amer.) like fort, but now usually like the musical term forte.
foyer foy-ay or fwah-yay (Amer. foy-er).
fracas (singular): frack-ah, (plural) frack-ahz (Amer. frake-us).
fulminate u as in dull.
fulsome u formerly as in dull, now always as in full.
furor 3 syllables (Amer. furor with 2).
Gaelic 1st syllable as gale.
gala 1st a as in calm. ° The former pronunciation with a as in gale is still used in the North and US.
gallant (brave, etc.): stress on 1st syllable; (polite and attentive to ladies) stress on 1st or 2nd syllable.
garage stress on 1st syllable, age as in camouflage (or rhyming with large). ° Pronunciation so as to rhyme with carriage is non-standard (Amer. ga-rahge).
garrulity stress on 2nd syllable, which sounds like rule.
garrulous stress on 1st syllable.
gaseous 1st syllable like gas.
genuine ine as in engine.
genus e as in genius; genera (plural) has e as in general.
gibber, gibberish now usually with g as in gin; g as in give was formerly frequent in the first word and normal in the second.
glacial 1st a as in glade.
golf o as in got. ° The pronunciation goff is old-fashioned.
gone o as in on. ° The pronunciation gawn is non-standard.
government ° In careful speech, do not drop the 1st n (or the whole 2nd syllable).
gratis a properly as in grate; but grahtis and grattis are commonly heard.
greasy _ s may be as in cease or easy.
grievous ° does not rhyme with previous.
gunwale gunn'l.
half-past ° In careful speech, avoid saying hah past or hoff posst.
harass(ment) stress on 1st syllable (Amer. often on 2nd).
have in rapid speech, the weakstressed infinitive have is reduced to 've and sounds like the weakly stressed form of the preposition of. When stress is restored to it, it should become have, not of, as in "You couldn't 've done it", "I could have" (not "I could of").
hectare 2nd syllable like tar, not tare.
hegemony stress on 2nd syllable, g as in get or (as also Amer.) as in gem.
Hegira stress on 1st syllable, which is like hedge.
heinous ei as in rein.
homo- (prefix = same): o as in from.
homoeopath 1st two syllables rhyme with Romeo.
homogeneous last three syllables sound like genius.
honorarium h silent, a as in rare.
hospitable stress properly on 1st syllable.
hotel h to be pronounced.
housewifery stress on 1st syllable, i as in whiff
hovel, hover o as in hot. ° The former pronunciation with o as in love is now only Amer.
idyll i as in idiot; it may be like i in idea in idyllic (with stress on 2nd syllable) and usually is in idyllist (with stress on 1st syllable).
illustrative stress on 1st syllable (Amer. on 2nd).
imbroglio g is silent; rhymes with folio.
impious stress on 1st syllable; on 2nd in impiety.
importune stress on 3rd syllable or (with some speakers) on 2nd.
inchoate stress on 1st syllable.
indict c is silent; rhymes with incite.

indisputable stress on 3rd syllable.
inexplicable stress originally on 2nd syllable, but now usually on 3rd.
infamous stress on 1st syllable.
inherent 1st e as in here.
intaglio g is silent, a as in pal or pass.
integral stress on 1st syllable.
intern (verb): stress on 2nd syllable; (noun, Amer.) on 1st.
internecine stress on 3rd syllable, last two syllables like knee sign.
interstice stress on 2nd syllable.
intestinal stress on 2nd syllable; 3rd syllable like tin.
intricacy stress on 1st syllable.
invalid (sick person): stress on 1st syllable, 2nd as in lid or machine; (verb) stress on 1st or 3rd syllable, 2nd i as in machine; (not valid) stress on 2nd syllable.
inveigle originally rhyming with beagle, but now commonly with Hegel.
inventory like infantry with v instead of f.
irrefragable stress on 2nd syllable.
irrelevant ° not irrelevant, a blunder sometimes heard.
irreparable stress on 2nd syllable.
irrevocable stress on 2nd syllable.
issue ss as in mission; but pronunciation to rhyme with miss you is very common.
isthmus do not drop the th.
January jan-yoor-y (Amer. jan-yoo-erry).
jejune stress on 2nd syllable.
jewellery jewel-ry. ° Not jool-ery.
joule (unit): rhymes with fool.
jubilee stress on 1st syllable ° Not 3rd.
jugular 1st syllable like jug; formerly as in conjugal.
junta pronounce as written. ° Hoonta, an attempt to reproduce the Spanish pronunciation, is chiefly Amer.
kilometre stress on 1st syllable, as with kilocycle, kilolitre. ° Not on 2nd syllable; the pattern is that of millimetre, centimetre (units), not that of speedometer, milometer, etc. (devices).
knoll o as in no.
laboratory stress on 2nd syllable. ° The former pronunciation, with stress on 1st syllable, is now chiefly used by Amer. speakers (with o as in Tory).
lamentable stress on 1st syllable.
languor as for clangour.
lasso stress on 2nd syllable, o as in do.
lather rhymes with gather, not rather.
launch rhymes with haunch, not branch.
leeward (in general use): lee-ward; (nautical) like lured.
leisure rhymes with pleasure (Amer. with seizure).
length ng as in long. ° Not lenth.
levee (reception, assembly): like levy; (Amer., embankment) may be stressed on 2nd syllable.
library in careful speech avoid dropping the 2nd syllable (li-bry).
lichen sounds like liken.
lieutenant 1st syllable like left; in Navy, like let (Amer. like loot).
liquorice licker-iss.
longevity ng as in lunge.
longitude ng as in lunge. ° Not (latitude and) longtitude, an error sometimes heard.
long-lived originally rhyming with arrived, but now usually like past tense lived.
lour rhymes with hour.
lugubrious loo-goo-brious.
machete ch as in attach; rhymes with Betty (or with some speakers, Katie).

machination ch as in mechanical, not as in machine.
machismo, macho ch as in attach, not as in mechanical.
magazine stress on 3rd syllable (Amer. and Northern pronunciation has stress on 1st).
maieutic 1st syllable like may.
mandatory stress on 1st syllable.
margarine g as in Margery.
marital stress on 1st syllable.
massage stress on 1st syllable (Amer. on 2nd).
matrix a as in mate; matrices (plural) the same, with stress on 1st syllable.
medicine two syllables (med-sin). ° The pronunciation with three syllables is normal in Scotland and the US, but disapproved of by many users of RP.
mediocre 1st syllable like mead.
metallurgy, -ist stress on 2nd syllable. ° The older pronunciation with stress on 1st syllable, becoming **rare** in Britain, is chiefly Amer.
metamorphosis stress on 3rd syllable.
metope two syllables.
midwifery stress on 1st syllable, i as in whiff
mien sounds like mean.
migraine 1st syllable like me (Amer. like my).
migratory stress on 1st syllable.
millenary stress on 2nd syllable, which is like Len or lean.
miscellany stress on 2nd syllable (Amer. on 1st).
mischievous stress on 1st syllable. ° Not rhyming with previous.
misericord stress on 2nd syllable.
mocha (coffee): originally (and Amer.) rhyming with coca, now often like mocker.
momentary, -ily stress on 1st syllable.
municipal stress on 2nd syllable.
nadir nay-dear.
naive nah-Eve or nigh-Eve.
naivety has 3 syllables.
nascent a as in fascinate.
necessarily in formal speech, has stress on 1st syllable, with reduction or elision of a; informally, especially in emphatic use, stressed on 3rd syllable (e. g. not necessarily!).
neither as for either.
nephew ph sounds like v (Amer. like f).
nicety has three syllables.
niche nitch has been the pronunciation for two or three centuries; neesh, now common, is remodelled on the French form.
nomenclature stress on 2nd syllable. The pronunciation with stress on 1st and 3rd syllables is now chiefly Amer.
nonchalant stress on 1st syllable, ch as in machine.
nuclear newk-lee-er. ° Not as if spelt nuclear.
nucleic stress on 2nd syllable, which has e as in equal.
obdurate stress on 1st syllable.
obeisance 2nd syllable like base.
obligatory stress on 2nd syllable.
obscenity e as in scent.
occurrence 2nd syllable like the 1st in current.
o'er (poetry, over): sounds like ore.
of see **have**.
often the t is silent, as in soften.
ominous 1st syllable as that of omelette.
ophthalmic ph =f not p.
opus o as in open.
ormolu orm-o-loo with weak 2nd o as in Caroline.

p (abbreviation for penny, pence): in formal context, say penny (after 1) or pence. ° “Pee” is informal only.

pace (with all due respect to): like pacey.

paella pah-ell-a.

panegyric stress on 3rd syllable, g as in gin, y as in lyric.

paprika stress on 1st syllable (Amer. on 2nd).

pariah the older pronunciation has the stress on 1st syllable, rhyming with carrier; the pronunciation with stress on 2nd syllable, rhyming with Isaiah, is now common (and normal Amer.).

participle stress on 1st syllable; 1st i may be dropped.

particularly in careful speech, avoid dropping the 4th syllable (particuly).

partisan as artisan.

pasty (pie): a now usually as in lass; the older sound, as in past, is sometimes used in Cornish pasty.

patent 1st syllable like pate. ° Some who use this pronunciation for the general sense, have 1st syllable like pat in Patent Office, letters patent.

pathos as for bathos.

patriarch 1st a as in paper.

patriot(ic) a as in pat or paper.

patron, patroness a as in paper.

patronage, patronize a as in pat.

pejorative stress on 2nd syllable.

peremptory stress on 2nd syllable (Amer. on 1st).

perhaps in careful speech, two syllables with h, not r, sounded; informally praps.

pharmacopoeia stress on oe; -poeia rhymes with idea.

philharmonic 2nd h is silent.

phthisis ph is silent.

pianist stress on 1st i, ia as in Ian

piano (instrument): a as in man; (musical direction) a as in calm.

piazza zz = ts.

pistachio a as in calm or man, ch as in machine.

plaid, plait rhyme with lad, flat.

plastic rhymes with fantastic. ° The pronunciation with a as in calm sounds affected to many people.

pogrom originally with stress on the 2nd syllable (as in Russian); now usually on the 1st.

pomegranate the older pronunciation was with 1st e silent, o as in come or from, and stress either on o or the 1st a; the pronunciation pom-gran-it is still used by some speakers, but pommy-gran-it is now usual.

porpoise oise like ose in purpose.

posthumous h is silent.

pot-pourri stress on 2nd syllable (Amer. on 3rd), pot- like Poe.

precedence originally with stress on 2nd syllable, now usually on 1st, which sounds like press.

precedent (adjective): stress on 2nd syllable; (noun) as for precedence.

precedented as for precedence.

preferable stress on 1st syllable.

premise (verb): stress on 2nd syllable, rhyming with surmise.

prestige stress on 2nd syllable, i and g as in r,gime.

prestigious rhymes with religious.

prima facie pry-ma fay-shee.

primarily stress on 1st syllable, with a reduced or elided. ° The pronunciation with stress on the 2nd syllable, used by some (but not all) Americans, is disapproved of by many users of RP.

Primates (order of mammals) originally with 3 syllables, but now often with 2.

primer (elementary school-book): i as in prime. ° The older pronunciation with i as in prim survives in Australia and New Zealand.

privacy Ui as in privet or private; the former is probably commoner; the latter is the older and Amer. pronunciation.

probably in careful speech, 3 syllables; informally often probbly.

proboscis pro-boss-iss.

process (noun): o as in probe. ° An older pronunciation with o as in profit is now only Amer.

process (verb, to treat): like the noun; (to walk in procession) stress on 2nd syllable.

promissory stress on 1st syllable.

pronunciation 2nd syllable like nun. ° Not pro-noun-ciation.

prosody 1st syllable like that of prospect.

protean stress on 1st syllable.

prot,g, 1st syllable like that of protestant (Amer. like that of protest).

proven o as in prove.

proviso 2nd syllable as that of revise.

puissance (show-jumping): pronounced with approximation to French, pui = pwi, a nasalized; (in poetry) **may** be pwiss-ance or pew-iss-ance, depending on scansion.

pursuivant Percy-vant.

pyramidal stress on 2nd syllable.

quaff rhymes with scoff

quagmire a originally as in wag, now usually as in quad.

qualm rhymes with calm; the older pronunciation, rhyming with shawm, is now rare.

quandary stress on 1st syllable; the older pronunciation, with stress on 2nd syllable, is rarely, if ever, heard.

quasi the vowels are like those in wayside.

quatercentenary kwatt-er-, not quarter-.

questionnaire 1st two syllables like question.

rabid 1st syllable like that of rabbit.

rabies 2nd syllable like bees, not like the 2nd syllable of babies.

rampage (verb): stress on 2nd syllable; (noun) on 1st syllable.

rapport stress on 2nd syllable, which sounds like pore (Amer. like port).

ratiocinate 1st two syllables like ratty, stress on 3rd.

rationale ale as in morale.

really rhymes with ideally, clearly, not with freely.

recess (noun and verb): stress on 2nd syllable.

recognize ° do not drop the g.

recondite stress on 1st or 2nd syllable. The former is the commoner, the latter, the older, pronunciation.

recuperate 2nd syllable like the 1st of Cupid.

referable stress on 1st syllable.

remediable, -al stress on 2nd syllable, e as in medium.

remonstrate stress on 1st syllable; the older pronunciation, with stress on 2nd syllable, is rare.

Renaissance stress on 2nd syllable, ai as in plaice.

renege the traditional pronunciation rhymes with league. UA pronunciation to rhyme with plague, for long dialectal, is now common. ° g is hard as in get, not as in allege.

reportage age as in camouflage, but with stress.

research (noun): stress on 2nd syllable (Amer. on 1st).

respite stress on 1st syllable, 2nd like spite (Amer. like spit).

restaurant pronunciation with final t silent and second a nasalized is preferred by many, but that with ant = ont is widespread.

revanchism anch as in ranch.

ribald 1st syllable like rib.

risible rhymes with visible.

risqu, rees-kay or riss-kay.

romance stress on 2nd syllable. ° Pronunciation with stress on 1st syllable, usually in sense "love affair, love story", is non-standard (except when used jocularly).

Romany 1st syllable as that of Romulus.

rotatory stress on 1st syllable.

rowan ow. often as in low, although in Scotland, whence the word comes, it is as in cow.

rowlock rhymes with Pollock.

sacrilegious now always rhymes with religious.

sahib sah-ib.

salsify sal-si-fee.

salve (noun, ointment; verb, soothe): properly rhymes with halve, but now usually with valve (Amer. with have).

salve (save ship): rhymes with valve.

satiety as for dubiety.

Saudi rhymes with rowdy, not bawdy.

scabies as for rabies.

scabrous 1st syllable like that of scabious (Amer. like scab).

scallop rhymes with wallop.

scarify (make an incision): rhymes with clarify. ° Not to be confused with slang scarify (terrify) pronounced scare-ify.

scenario sc as in scene, ario as in impresario (Amer. with a as in Mary).

schedule sch as in Schubert (Amer. as in school).

schism properly, ch is silent (siz'm); but skiz'm is often heard.

schist (rock): sch as in Schubert.

schizo- skitso.

scilicet 1st syllable like that of silent.

scone rhymes with on.

second (to support): stress on 1st syllable; (to transfer) on 2nd.

secretary sek-re-try. ° Not sek-e-try or sek-e-terry or (Amer.) sek-re-terry.

secretive stress on 1st syllable.

seise, seisin ei as in seize.

seismic 1st syllable like size.

seraglio g silent, a as in ask.

sheik sounds like shake (Amer. like chic).

simultaneous i as in simple (Amer. as in Simon).

sinecure properly, i as in sign, but i as in sin is common.

Sinhalese sin-hal-ese.

Sioux soo.

sisal 1st syllable like the 2nd of precise.

sixth in careful speech, avoid the pronunciation sikh.

slalom a as in spa.

slaver (dribble): a as in have.

sleight sounds like slight.

sloth rhymes with both.

slough (bog): rhymes with bough; (to cast a skin) with tough.

sobriquet 1st syllable like that of sober.

sojourn 1st o as in sob (Amer. as in sober).

solder o as in sob (Amer. pronunciation is sodder or sawder).

solecism o as in sob.

solenoid stress on 1st syllable, o as in sober or as in sob.

sonorous stress on 1st syllable, 1st o as in sob.

soporific 1st o now usually as in sob (formerly also as in sober).

sough (rushing sound): rhymes with tough.

sovereignty sov'renty. ° Not sov-rain-ity.

Soviet o as in sober. The pronunciation with o as in sob is also very common.

species ci as in precious. Not spee-seez.
spinet may be stressed on either syllable.
spontaneity as for deify, deity.
stalwart 1st syllable like stall.
status 1st syllable like stay. ° Not statt-us.
stigmata stress on 1st syllable. ° Not with ata as in sonata.
strafe rhymes with staff.
stratosphere a as in Stratford.
stratum, strata a of first syllable like 1st a of sonata.
strength ng as in strong. ° Not strenth.
suave, suavity a as 1st a in lava.
subsidence stress originally on 2nd syllable with i as in side; pronunciation with stress on 1st syllable and i as in sit is increasingly common.
substantial 1st a as in ant, not aunt.
substantive (in grammar): stress on 1st syllable; (having separate existence, permanent) on 2nd syllable.
suffragan g as in get.
supererogatory stress on 4th syllable.
superficies super-fish-(i-)eez.
supine (adjective): stress on 1st syllable (Amer. on 2nd).
suppose ° in careful speech, avoid the elision of the u; informal I s'pose so, s'posing it happens?
surety now usually three syllables (sure-et-y); originally two (sure-ty).
surveillance ° do not drop the l; sur-vey-lance, not sur-vey-ance.
suzerain u as in Susan.
swath a as in water; in plural, th as in paths.
syndrome two syllables (formerly three).
taxidermist stress on 1st or 3rd syllable.
temporarily stress on 1st syllable (with weakening or dropping of o): temp-ra-rily. ° Not tempo-rar-ily.
Tibetan 2nd syllable like bet, not beat.
tirade tie-raid.
tissue as for issue.
tonne sounds like ton. ° To avoid misunderstanding, metric can be prefixed; but in most spoken contexts the slight difference between the imperial and metric weights will not matter.
tortoise as for porpoise.
tourniquet 3rd syllable like the 2nd of croquet (Amer. like kit).
towards the form with two syllables is now the most common; some speakers use the pronunciation tords in all contexts, others only in some.
trachea stress on e (Amer. on 1st a, pronounced as in trade).
trait 2nd t is silent (in Amer. pronunciation, it is sounded).
trajectory stress properly on 1st syllable; now often (and Amer.) on 2nd.
transferable stress on 1st syllable is implied by the single r (see "doubling of final consonant" in topic 1. 16; but the form transferrable was formerly common, and accounts for the common pronunciation with stress on 2nd syllable).
transition tran-sizh-on or tran-zish-on.
transparent last two syllables either like those of apparent or like parent.
trauma, traumatic au as in cause (Amer. as in gaucho).
traverse (noun): stress on 1st syllable; (verb) on 2nd syllable. (The original pronunciation of the verb exactly like the noun is still usual in Amer. English.)
trefoil stress on 1st syllable, e as in even or as in ever.
triumvir 1st two syllables like those of triumphant.
troth rhymes with both (Amer. with cloth).
trow rhymes with know.

truculent 1st u as in truck; formerly as in true.

turquoise tur-kwoyz or tur-kwahz.

ululate yool-yoo-late. The alternative pronunciation ull-yoo-late seems now to be chiefly Amer.

umbilical stress on 2nd syllable.

unprecedented 2nd syllable like press.

untoward the older pronunciation rhymed with lowered, but the pronunciation with stress on the 3rd syllable is now usual.

Uranus stress on 1st syllable.

urinal stress on 1st syllable.

usual in careful speech, avoid complete loss of u (yoo-zh'l).

uvula yoo-vyoo-la.

uxorious 1st u as Uxbridge.

vagary the original pronunciation was with stress on 2nd syllable, but this has been almost entirely **superseded** by that with stress on 1st syllable.

vagina, vaginal stress on 2nd syllable, as in china.

valance rhymes with balance.

valence, -cy (chemistry): a as in ale.

valet those who employ them sound the t.

Valkyrie stress on 1st syllable.

vase a as in dance (Amer. rhymes with face or phase).

veld sounds like felt.

venison the old pronunciation ven-z'n is now rare; ven-i-z'n or ven-i-s'n are usual.

veterinary stress on 1st syllable, with reduction or elision of 2nd e and a (vet-rin-ry). ° Not vet-nar or (Amer.) vet-rin-ery.

vice (in the place of): rhymes with spicy.

vicegerent three syllables, 2nd e as in errant.

victualler, **victuals** sound like vitt-ell-er, vittles.

viola (instrument): stress on 2nd syllable, i as in Fiona; (flower) stress on 1st syllable, i as in vie.

vitamin i as in hit (Amer. as in vital).

viz. (=videlicet): when reading aloud, it is customary to substitute namely; "viz" is chiefly jocular.

voluntarily stress on 1st syllable.

waistcoat the older pronunciation was wess-kot (with 2nd syllable like that of mascot); but the pronunciation as spelt has replaced it, except among older speakers.

walnut, **walrus** ° do not drop the l.

werewolf 1st syllable like weir.

whoop (cry of excitement, whoop it up): = woop; (cough, whooping cough) = hoop; both rhyme with loop.

wrath rhymes with cloth (Amer. with hath).

wroth as for troth.

yoghurt yogg-urt (Amer. yoh-gurt).

zoology in careful speech, best pronounced with 1st o as in zone; there are a number of other compounds of zoo- in technical use, in which this is the normal pronunciation.

3.0 Vocabulary

The perfect use of language is that in which every word carries the meaning that it is intended to, no less and no more.
(C. Connolly, *Enemies of Promise*)

This section is concerned with problems of meaning, construction, derivation, and diction, associated with individual words. The main aim is to recommend the meaning or construction most appropriate for serious writing or formal speaking, but some attention is paid to informal and American usage.

aboriginal (noun) should be used in formal contexts as the singular of aborigines; Aboriginal, Aborigines (with capitals) are preferable for singular and plural when referring to the aboriginal inhabitants of Australia.

° Aborigine is informal only.

account, to reckon, consider, is not followed by *as*, e. g. Mere morality... was once accounted a shameful and cynical thing (G. B. Shaw).

affect, to have an influence on, e. g. Hugh was immensely affected by the way Randall had put it (Iris Murdoch).

° Do not confuse with effect to accomplish, e. g. He picked at the German's lapel, hoping to effect a closer relationship by touch (Patrick White).

° There is a noun effect "result, property", e. g. to good effect, personal effects, sound effects; but there is no noun affect except in the specialized language of Psychology.

affinity between or with, not to or for, since mutual relationship or attraction is meant, e. g. Ann felt an affinity with them, as she too were an old dusty object (Iris Murdoch); Points of affinity between Stephen and Bloom (Anthony Burgess).

afflict: see **inflict**

aftermath can be used of any after-effects, e. g. The aftermath of the wedding seemed to mean different things to different people (The Times). It is pedantic to object to the sense "unpleasant consequences" on the ground of derivation.

agenda (from a Latin plural) is usually a singular noun (with plural agendas), e. g. It's a short agenda, by the way (Edward Hyams).

But it is occasionally found in its original use as a plural meaning "things to be done" or "items of business to be considered" (singular *agend*).

aggravate (1) To make worse, e. g. The war... simply aggravates the permanent human situation (C. S. Lewis). (2) To annoy, exasperate.

° Sense (2) is regarded by some people as incorrect, but is common informally. The participial adjective aggravating is often used in sense (2) by good writers, e. g. He had pronounced and aggravating views on what the United States was doing for the world (Graham Greene).

ain't (= are not, is not, have not has not) is not used in Standard English except in representations of dialect speech, or humorously. Aren't (= are not) is also a recognized colloquialism for am not in the interrogative construction aren't I.

alibi, a plea that when an alleged act took place one was elsewhere.

° The sense "an excuse" is informal and to many people unacceptable, e. g. Low spirits make you seem complaining... I have an alibi because I'm going to have a baby (L. P. Hartley).

all of (= the whole of, the entirety of, every one of) is usual before pronouns, e. g. And so say all of us, or emphatically, often paralleling none of etc., before nouns, e. g. Marshall Stone has all of the problems but none of the attributes of a star (Frederick Raphael). Otherwise all + noun is normal, e. g. All the King's men.

° The general use of all of before nouns is Amer. only.

all right. This phrase is popularly thought of as a unit, e. g. an all-right bloke, but its unitary nature has not yet been recognized in spelling by the standard language, probably because the expression remains largely an informal one.

° Alright, though widely seen in the popular press, remains non-standard, even where the standard spelling is somewhat cumbersome, as in: I just wanted to make sure it was all all right (Iris Murdoch).

allude means “refer indirectly”; an allusion is “an indirect reference”, e. g. He would allude to her, and hear her discussed, but never mention her by name (E. M. Forster).

° The words are not, except very informally, mere synonyms for refer, reference.

alternative (adjective and noun). The use of alternative with reference to more than two options, though sometimes criticized, is acceptable, e. g. We have been driven to Proletarian Democracy by the failure of all the alternative systems (G. B. Shaw).

° Do not confuse with alternate happening or following in turns, e. g. Just as every sense is afflicted with a fitting torment so is every spiritual faculty;... the sensitive faculty with alternate longing and rage (James Joyce).

altogether. ° Beware of using this when all (adjective) together (adverb) is meant, e. g. The dogs were now running, all together. The reverse error, of using all together for the adverb altogether, should also be avoided; altogether is correct in There's too much going on altogether at the moment (Evelyn Waugh).

amend, to alter to something that sounds better, make improvements in; to make better e. g. If you consider my expression inadequate I am willing to amend it (G. B. Shaw); I have amended my life, have I not? (James Joyce); noun amendment.

° Do not confuse with emend to remove errors from (something written), e. g. An instance of how the dictionary may be emended or censored (Frederic Raphael); noun emendation. An emendation will almost always be an amendment, but the converse is not true.

analogous means “similar in certain respects”. It is not a mere synonym for similar.

anticipate (1) To be aware of (something) in advance and take suitable action, to deal with (a thing) or perform (an action) before someone else has had time to act so as to gain an advantage, to take action appropriate to (an event) before the due time, e. g.

His power to anticipate every change of volume and tempo (C. Day Lewis); I shall anticipate any such opposition by tendering my resignation now (Angus Wilson); She had anticipated execution by suicide (Robert Graves); Some unknown writer in the second century... suddenly anticipated the whole technique of modern... narrative (C. S. Lewis).

(2) To take action before (another person) has had the opportunity to do so, e. g. I'm sorry—do go on. I did not mean to anticipate you (John le Carr.).

(3) To expect (used only with an event as a direct object), e. g. Serious writers... anticipated that the detective story might supersede traditional fiction; Left-wing socialists really anticipated a Fascist dictatorship (A. J. P. Taylor).

° Sense (3) is well established in informal use, but is regarded as incorrect by many people. Use expect in formal contexts. In any case, anticipate cannot be followed, as expect can, by infinitive constructions (I expect to see him or him to come) or a personal object (I expect him today) and cannot mean “expect as one's due” (I expect good behaviour from pupils).

antithetical to means “characterize by direct opposition to”; it is not a mere synonym for opposed to.

approve (1) (Followed by direct object) authorize, e. g. I will give letters of introduction to persons approved by you (NEB).

(2) (Followed by of) consider good, e. g. All the books approved of by young persons of cultivated taste (C. P. Snow).

° Approve should not be used in sense (2) with a direct object, as (wrongly) in Laziness, rudeness, and untidiness are not approved in this establishment (correctly, approved of).

apt, followed by the to-infinitive, carries no implication that the state or action expressed by the infinitive is undesirable from the point of view of its grammatical subject (though it often is from that of the writer), e. g. In weather like this he is apt to bowl at the batsman's head (Robert Graves). It indicates that the subject of the sentence is habitually predisposed to doing what is expressed by the verb, e. g. Time was apt to become confusing (Muriel Spark). Compare liable, which, however, is not complementary to apt to, but overlaps with it; apt to, followed by a verb with undesirable overtones, = “habitually or customarily liable to”.

aren't see **ain't**.

Argentine, Argentinian can be both noun (a native of Argentina) and adjective (= belonging to Argentina).

° Only the former is used in Argentine Republic, and it also has the advantage of brevity when used in other contexts. It rhymes with turpentine.

artiste, a professional singer, dancer, or similar public performer: used of persons of either sex.

as (1) = that, which, or who (relative) is now non-standard except after same, such, e. g. Such comments as seem to be needed (George Orwell); but not I know somebody who knows this kid as went blind (Alan Sillitoe, representing regional speech).

(2) = that (conjunction), introducing a noun clause, is now non-standard, e. g. in I don't know as you'll like it.

Asian is to be preferred when used of persons to Asiatic, which is now widely considered derogatory; the formation of Asian is in any case more closely parallel to that of European, African, etc. Asiatic is acceptable in other contexts, e. g. Asiatic coastal regions; The Royal Asiatic Society; Asiatic cholera.

as from is used in formal dating to mean "from" or "after" and followed by an actual date, e. g. As from 10 p. m. on 15 October. As of, originally Amer., has the same meaning and use.

° As of now, yesterday, and the like, are informal and humorous only.

aside from Amer., = apart from, except for.

as if, as though (1) Followed by the past tense when the verb refers to an unreal possibility (i. e. when the statement introduced by as if, as though is untrue, or unlikely), e. g. Every critic writes as if he were infallible (Cyril Connolly); It's not as though he lived like a Milord (Evelyn Waugh). (2) Followed by the present tense when the statement is true, or might be true; this is especially common when the verbs look or sound precede, e. g. I suppose you get on pretty well with your parents. You look as though you do (Kingsley Amis); He speaks as though even the rules which we freely invent are somehow suggested to us in virtue of their being right (Mary Warnock).

attention. Someone called it to my attention (Alison Lurie) represents an illogical reversal of the idiom, not uncommon in speech; someone called (or drew) my attention to it or someone brought it to my attention would be better in formal contexts.

author (verb) is a rarely required synonym for write; co-author, however, is acceptable as a verb.

avenge: one avenges an injured person or oneself on (occasionally against) an offender, or a wrong on an offender; the noun is vengeance (on), and the idea is usually of justifiable retribution, as distinct from revenge, though the distinction is not absolute.

aware is normally a predicative adjective followed by an of-phrase or a that-clause, but can also be preceded by an adverb in the sense "aware of, appreciative of (the subject indicated by the adverb)", a chiefly Amer. use, e. g. The most intellectually ambitious and the most technically aware (W. S. Graham).

° To use aware without any qualifying word at all is modish but meaningless, e. g. Aware, provincial, intelligent, tall Englishman (New Statesman).

bacteria is the plural of bacterium, not a singular noun.

baluster, a short pillar with a curving outline, especially in a balustrade; banister, an upright supporting a stair handrail (usually in the plural).

beg the question, to assume the truth of the thing which is to be proved, e. g. I scoffed at that pompous question-begging word "Evolution" (H. G. Wells).

° It does not mean (1) to avoid giving a straight answer; or (2) to invite the obvious question (that...).

behalf on behalf of X (= in X's interest, as X's representative) should not be confused with on the part of x (= proceeding from or done by X); behalf cannot replace part in His death was largely due to panic on his part.

benign (in Medicine) has malignant as its antonym.

beside (preposition) is used of spatial relationships, or in figurative adaptations of these, e. g. Beside oneself with joy; Quite beside the question; We all seemed children beside him (Evelyn Waugh); besides = in addition to, other than, e. g. Besides this I started my second year by joining the Ruskin School of Art (Evelyn Waugh).

between. There are no grounds for objection to the use of between "to express the relation of a thing to many surrounding things severally and collectively" (OED); among should not be substituted in, e. g., Cordial relations between Britain, Greece, and Turkey. see also **choose between**.

bi- (prefix). Biannual = appearing (etc.) twice a year, half-yearly; biennial = recurring (etc.) every two years, two-yearly. Bimonthly, bi-weekly, and bi-yearly are ambiguous in sense, meaning either "twice a month (etc.)" or "every two months (etc.)"; they are best avoided.

° Use twice a month or semi-monthly, twice a week or semi-weekly, and twice a year in the first sense, and every two months, fortnightly or every two weeks, and every two years in the second sense.

billion, etc. (1) Traditional British usage has a billion = a million million (1,000,000,000,000 = 10 to the power of 12), a trillion = a million to the power of 3 (10 to the power of 18), and a quadrillion = a million to the power of 4 (10 to the power of 24); the logic is that the initial bi-, tri-, quadri-, etc. relate to the powers of a million.

(2) The US usage makes each "step" from million to quadrillion, and beyond, a power of 1,000; i. e. million = 1000 to the power of 2, billion = 1000 to the power of 3, trillion = 1000 to the power of 4, quadrillion = 1000 to the power of 5.

(3) For the quantity "thousand million" (1000 to the power of 3 = 10 to the power of 9), the older British term milliard is now rare. Many people who have frequent need to refer to the quantity, namely astronomers and economists, use the American billion for this. Most British national newspapers have officially adopted it too.

° In general contexts it is probably safer to use thousand million (X,000 m.). But where the sense is vague, e. g. A billion miles away, Billions of stars, the exact value is immaterial. Note that American trillion (10 to the power of 12) = traditional British billion.

but = "except", followed by a pronoun: see **but, case following**.

candelabra is properly the plural of candelabrum and is best kept so in written English.

° Candelabra (singular), candelabras (plural) are frequent informally.

censure, to criticize harshly and unfavourably, e. g. Laura censured his immoral marriage (E. M. Forster).

° Do not confuse with censor to suppress (the whole or parts of books, plays, etc.).

centre about, (a)round, meaning (figuratively) "to gather, revolve, or turn around" is criticized by many authorities, though used by good writers, e. g. A rather restless, cultureless life, centring round tinned food, Picture Post, the radio and the internal combustion engine (George Orwell). It can be avoided by using to be centred in or on, e. g. My universe was still centred in my mother's fragrant person (Richard Church).

century. Strictly, since the first century ran from the year 1 to the year 100, the first year of a given century should be that ending in the digits 01, and the last year of the preceding century should be the year before, ending in two noughts.

° In popular usage, understandably, the reference of these terms has been moved back one year, so that one will expect the twenty-first century to run from 2000 to 2099. Beware of ambiguity in their written use.

character. The use of this word after an adjective as a substitute for an abstract-noun termination (-ness, -ty, or the like), or for the word kind, devalues it and should be avoided, e. g. the uniqueness and antiquity of the fabric, not the unique and ancient character of the fabric.

charisma (1) Properly, a theological word (plural charismata) designating any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (see I Corinthians 12). (2) In general use (usually as a mass noun, with no plural), a term (drawn from the works of the German sociologist Max Weber) for the capacity to inspire followers with devotion and enthusiasm.

charismatic (1) Designating a Christian movement that lays stress on the charismata. (2) Generally, "having the capacity to inspire with devotion and enthusiasm", e. g. A forcefully charismatic hero compensating in physical presence for what he politically lacks (Terry Eagleton).

choose between: this construction and choice between, are normally followed by and in written English; informally or is sometimes used, e. g. The poorest girl alive may not be able to choose between being Queen of England or Principal of Newnham; but she can choose between ragpicking and flowerselling (G. B. Shaw).

chronic is used of a disease that is long-lasting, though its manifestations may be intermittent (the opposite is acute "coming sharply to a crisis"); it is used in much the same way of other conditions, e. g. The chronic unemployment of the nineteen-twenties (A. J. P. Taylor); The commodities of which there is a chronic shortage (George Orwell).

° The sense "objectionable, bad, severe" is very informal.

comparable is followed by with in sense (1) of compare and by to in sense (2). The latter is much the more usual use, e. g. The little wooden crib-figures... were by no means comparable to the mass-produced figures (Muriel Spark).

compare. In formal use, the following distinctions of sense are made: (1) "Make a comparison of x with y", followed by with, e. g. You've got to compare method with method, and ideal with ideal (John le Carre).

(2) 'Say to be similar to, liken to", followed by to, e. g. To call a bishop a mitred fool and compare him to a mouse (G. B. Shaw).

(3) Intransitively, = "to be compared", followed by with, e. g. None can compare with thee (NEB). ° Compare with is loosely used in sense (2); the senses overlap, e. g. How can you compare the Brigadier with my father? (John Osborne). Conversely, in the separate clause (as) compared with or to x, only sense (1) is possible, but to occurs as well as with, e. g. Tarzan... bewails his human ugliness as compared to the beauty of the apes (Tom Stoppard); Earth is tractable stuff compared with coal (George Orwell).

comparison is usually followed by with, especially in by or in comparison with. It is followed by to when the sense is "the action of likening (to)", e. g. The comparison of philosophy to a yelping she-dog (Jowett).

complaisant, disposed to please others or comply with others" wishes; noun complaisance, e. g. The indulgent complaisance which Horace did not bother to disguise (Frederic Raphael).

° Do not confuse with complacent self-satisfied (noun complacency).

compose can be used to mean "constitute, make up" with the constituents as subject and the whole as object, e. g. The tribes which composed the German nation. It is more commonly used in the passive with the whole as subject and the constituents as object, e. g. His... face was composed of little layers of flesh like pallid fungus (Iris Murdoch).

comprise. The proper constructions with comprise are the converse of those used with compose. (1) In the active, meaning "consist of", with the whole as subject and the constituents as objects, e. g. The faculty comprises the following six departments.

° In sense (1), comprise differs from consist in not being followed by of. Unlike include, comprise indicates a comprehensive statement of constituents.

(2) In the passive, meaning "to be embraced or comprehended in", with the constituents as subject and the whole as object, e. g. Fifty American dollars comprised in a single note (Graham Greene).

° Comprise is often used as a synonym of compose, e. g. The twenty-odd children who now comprise the school (Miss Read). This is regarded as incorrect by many people. It is especially objectionable in the passive, since comprise is not followed by of; write The faculty is composed (not comprised) of six departments.

condole, to express sympathy, is always followed by with, e. g. Many... had come... to condole with them on their brother's death (NEB).

° Do not confuse with console "to comfort", followed by direct object, e. g. Console one another... with these words (NEB).

conduce, to lead or contribute (to a result), is always followed by to; similarly conducive (adjective); e. g. The enterprise was popular, since it conduced to cut price jobs (J. I. M. Stewart).

conform may be followed by to or with, e. g. The United Nations... conformed to Anglo-American plans (A. J. P. Taylor); Having himself no particular opinions or tastes he relied upon whatever conformed with those of his companion (John le Carre).

congeries, a collection of things massed together, is a singular noun, e. g. A congeries of halls and inns on the site (J. I. M. Stewart); it is unchanged in the plural.

° The form congery, formed in the misapprehension that congeries is plural only, is erroneous.

connote, denote. Connote means "to imply in addition to the primary meaning, to imply as a consequence or condition", e. g. Literature has needed to learn how to exploit all the connotations that lie latent in a word (Anthony Burgess). Denote means "to be the sign of, indicate, signify", e. g. A proper name will convey no information beyond the bare fact that it denotes a person (Stephen Ullman).

° The two terms are kept rigidly distinct in Logic, but in popular usage connote is frequently used to mean "convey to the mind", or "mean in actual use" and hence verges on the sense of denote. Denote cannot be used in the senses of connote, e. g. in His silence does not connote hesitation (Iris Murdoch).

consequent, following as a result, adverb consequently, e. g. Two engaged in a common pursuit do not consequently share personal identity (Muriel Spark). These are nearly always to be used rather than consequential "following as an indirect result" and consequentially, which are rarer and more specialized.

consist consist of = be composed of, made up of; consist in = have as its essential quality, e. g. All enjoyment consists in undetected sinning (G. B. Shaw).

continual, always happening, very frequent and without cessation; continuous, connected, unbroken, uninterrupted; similarly the adverbs; e. g. He was continually sending Tiberius not very helpful military advice (Robert Graves); There was a continuous rattle from the one-armed bandits (Graham Greene).

continuance, continuation. The former relates mainly to the intransitive senses of continue (to be still in existence), the latter to its transitive senses (to keep up, to resume), e. g. The great question of our continuance after death (J. S. Huxley); As if contemplating a continuation of her assault (William Trevor).

cousin (1) The children of brothers or sisters are first cousins to each other. (2) The children of first cousins are second cousins to each other. (3) The child of one's first cousin, and the first cousin of one's parent, is one's first cousin once removed. (4) The grandchild of one's first cousin, or the first cousin of one's grandparent, is one's first cousin twice removed; and so on. (5) Cousin-german = first cousin.

credible, able to be believed. ° Do not confuse with credulous, too ready to believe things, as e. g. in Even if one is credible (correctly credulous) enough to believe in their ability (Daily Telegraph).

crescendo, used figuratively, means "a progressive increase in force or effect". Do not use it when climax is meant, e. g. in The storm reached a crescendo (correctly a climax) at midnight.

criteria is the plural of criterion, not a singular noun.

crucial, decisive, critical, e. g. His medical studies were not merely an episode in the development of his persona but crucial to it (Frederic Raphael).

° The weakened sense "important" is informal only.

data (1) In scientific, philosophical, and general use usually considered as a number of items and treated as plural, e. g. Let us give the name of "sense-data" to the things which are immediately known in sensation: such things as colours, sounds, (etc.) (Bertrand Russell); The optical data are incomplete (Nature); the singular is datum, e. g. Personality is not a datum from which we start (C. S. Lewis).

(2) In computing and allied disciplines it is treated as a mass noun (i. e. a collective item), and used with words like this, that, and much, and with singular verbs; it is sometimes so treated in general use, e. g. Useful data has been obtained (Winston Churchill).

° Some people object to use (2).

° Data is not a singular countable noun and therefore cannot be preceded by a, every, each, either, neither, and cannot be given a plural form datas.

decidedly, decisively. Decidedly, definitely; undoubtedly, e. g. The bungalow had a decidedly English appearance (Muriel Spark). Decisively (1) conclusively, so as to decide the question, e. g. The definition of "capital" itself depends decisively on the level of technology employed (E. F. Schumacher); (2) resolutely, unhesitatingly, e. g. The young lady, whose taste has to be considered, decisively objected to him (G. B. Shaw).

decimate, (originally) to kill or destroy one in every ten of; (now usually) to destroy or remove a large proportion of, e. g. All my parents' friends, my friends' brothers were getting killed. Our circle was decimated (Rosamond Lehmann).

° Decimate does not mean "defeat utterly".

decline (verb: to refuse an invitation) has no derived noun; we have to make do with refusal if declining cannot be used.

definitive, decisive, unconditional, final; (of an edition) authoritative; e. g. The Gold Cup flat handicap, the official and definitive result of which he had read in the Evening Telegraph (James Joyce).

° Do not use instead of definite (= having exact limits, distinct, precise); it cannot replace the latter in We finally received a definite no.

delusion, illusion. A general distinction can be drawn, though it is not absolute. Delusion would naturally occur in psychiatric contexts, and is used similarly outside them, to denote a false idea, impression, or belief held tenaciously, arising mainly from the internal workings of the mind; e. g. delusions of grandeur, and He's been sent here for delusions. His most serious delusion is that he's a murderer (Robert Graves).

Illusion denotes a false impression derived either from the external world, e. g. optical illusion, and A partition making two tiny boxes, giving at least the illusion of privacy (Doris Lessing), or from faulty thinking, e. g. I still imagine I could live in Rome, but it may be an illusion (Iris Murdoch).

It is in this second sense that illusion is almost equivalent to delusion; cf. I hope to strike some small blows for what I believe to be right, but I have no delusions that knock-outs are likely (Frederic Raphael). It should be remembered that delusion carries the sense of being deluded (by oneself or another), whereas no verb is implied in illusion; on the other hand, one can be said to be disillusioned, whereas delusion forms no such derivative.

demean (1) Demean oneself = conduct oneself (usually with adverbial expression), e. g. Even on the scaffold he demeaned himself with dignity. (2) Demean (someone or something) = lower in status, especially with oneself, e. g. Their nobles would not demean themselves to serve their governor (NEB).

denote: see **connote**.

depend, to be contingent on (a condition or cause), is followed by on or upon.

° The use of it depends followed, without on or upon, by an interrogative clause, is informal only, e. g. It depends what you have.. in mind in forming a library of gramophone records whether you think it worth acquiring (The Times).

depreciate, deprecate. Depreciate (1) to make or become lower in value; (2) to belittle, disparage, e. g. To defend our record we seem forced to depreciate the Africans (Listener); To become a little more forthcoming and less self- depreciating (Richard Adams).

Deprecate (1) (with a plan, proceeding, purpose, etc. as the object) to express a wish against or disapproval of, e. g. I deprecate this extreme course, because it is good neither for my pocket nor for their own souls (G. B. Shaw); Polly.. patted her father's head in deprecation of such forcible metaphor (Anthony Powell).

(2) (with a person as the object) to express disapproval of, to reprove; to disparage, e. g. Anyone who has reprinted his reviews is in no position to deprecate our reprinter (Christopher Ricks).

° Sense (2) of deprecate tends to take on the sense of depreciate (2), especially in conjunction with self. This use is frequently found in good writers, e. g. A humorous self-deprecation about one's own advancing senility (Aldous Huxley); The old, self-deprecating expression (Susan Hill). It is, however, widely regarded as incorrect.

derisive = scoffing; derisory = (1) scoffing, (2) so small or unimportant as to be ridiculous (now the more usual sense), e. g. A part... once looked upon as discreditable and derisory (Anthony Powell).

dialect (form of speech) forms dialectal as its adjective; dialectic (form of reasoning) can be adjective as well as noun, or can have dialectical as its adjective.

dice is the normal singular as well as the plural (one dice, two dice); the old singular, die, is found only in the die is cast, straight (or true) as a die, and in mathematical discussions, e. g. Rolling a die will generate a stream of random numbers.

dichotomy in non-technical use means "differentiation into contrasting categories" and is frequently followed by between, e. g. An absolute dichotomy between science and reason on the one hand and faith and poetry on the other.

° It does not mean dilemma or ambivalence.

die (noun): see **dice**.

different can be followed by from to or than.

(1) Different from is the most usual expression in both written and spoken English; it is the most favoured by good writers, and is acceptable in all contexts, e. g. It is also an "important" book, in a sense different from the sense in which that word is generally used (George Orwell).

(2) Different to is common informally. It sometimes sounds more natural than different from, and should then be used; e. g. when yoked with similar and followed by a phrase introduced by to: His looks are neither especially similar nor markedly different to those of his twin brother.

(3) Different than is an established idiom in American English, but is not uncommon in British use, e. g. Both came from a different world than the housing estate outside London (Doris Lessing). Both different to and different than are especially valuable as a means of avoiding the repetition and the relative construction required after different from in sentences like I was a very different man in 1935 from what I was in 1916 (Joyce Cary). This could be recast as I was a very different man in 1935 than I was in 1916 or than in 1916. Compare The American theatre, which is suffering from a different malaise than ours, which is greatly preferable to suffering from a different malaise from that which ours is suffering from.

This construction is especially common when different is part of an adverbial clause (e. g. in a different way) or when the adverb differently is used, and has been employed by good writers since the seventeenth century, e. g. Things were constructed very differently now than in former times (Trollope); Sebastian was a drunkard in quite a different sense to myself (Evelyn Waugh); Puts one in a different position to your own father (John Osborne).

differential, a technical term Mathematics, an abbreviation for differential gear, or a term for a maintained difference in wage between groups of workers.

° It is not a synonym for difference.

digraph = a group of two letter standing for a single sound, e. g. ea in head, gh in cough; ligature = a typographical symbol consisting of two letters joined together, e. g. fi, fl. The term diphthong is best restricted to the sense for which there is no synonym, namely "a union of two vowels pronounced in one syllable", which is something primarily spoken and heard, not written; i in find, ei in rein, and eau in bureau all represent diphthongs. One cause of confusion is that Latin had two diphthongs (ae and oe) often printed as ligatures " and oe in English words derived from Latin these are now digraphs " and oe (sometimes modified into e: see "ae and oe" in topic 1.4 representing single vowel sounds).

dilemma (1) A choice between two (or sometimes more than two) undesirable or awkward alternatives, e. g. The unpleasant dilemma of being obliged either to kill the father or give up the daughter. (2) More loosely, a perplexing situation in which a choice has to be made,

e. g. The dilemma of the 1960s about whether nice girls should sleep with men (Alan Watkins).

° It is not merely a synonym for problem.

diphthong: see **digraph**.

direct is used as an adverb in two of the main senses of the adjective: (1) straight, e. g. Another door led direct to the house (Evelyn Waugh); (2) without intermediaries, e. g. I appeal now, over your head, direct to the august oracle (G. B. Shaw).

directly is used in most of the main senses of the adjective, e. g. Why don't you deal directly with the wholesalers? (G. B. Shaw); The wind is blowing directly on shore; directly opposite, opposed.

° It is not usually used to mean "straight", since it has an extra sense, used in similar contexts, "immediately, without delay", e. g. Just a night in London—I'll be back directly (Iris Murdoch).

discomfit, to thwart, disconcert; similarly discomfiture; e. g. He discomfited his opponents by obliging them to disagree with a great logician (Frederic Raphael).

° Do not confuse with discomfort (now rare as a verb, = make uneasy).

disinterest, lack of interest, indifference, e. g. Buried the world under a heavy snowfall of disinterest (Christopher Fry).

° The use of disinterest in this sense may be objected to on the same grounds as sense (2) of **disinterested**; but the word is rarely used in any other sense, and the possible alternative uninterest is very rare indeed.

disinterested (1) Impartial, unbiased, e. g. Thanks to his scientific mind he understood—a proof of disinterested intelligence which had pleased her (Virginia Woolf). The noun is disinterestedness.

(2) Uninterested, indifferent, e. g. It is not that we are disinterested in these subjects, but that we are better qualified to talk about our own interests (The Times). The noun is disinterest.

° Sense (2) is common in informal use, but is widely regarded as incorrect and is avoided by careful writers, who prefer uninterested.

disposal is the noun from dispose of (get off one's hands, deal with); disposition is the noun from dispose (arrange, incline).

distinctive, serving to distinguish, characteristic, e. g. It had smelled like this soap today, a light, entirely distinctive smell (Susan Hill).

° Do not confuse with distinct, separate, individual, definite, e. g. Trying to put into words an impression that was not distinct in my own mind (W. Somerset Maugham).

drunk, drunken. In older and literary usage, the predicative and attributive forms respectively; now usually allocated to distinct senses, namely "intoxicated" and "given to drink", e. g. They were lazy, irresponsible, and drunken; but on this occasion they were not drunk. Drunken also means "caused by or exhibiting drunkenness", e. g. a drunken brawl.

due to (1) That ought to be given to, e. g. Pay Caesar what is due to Caesar (NEB). (2) To be ascribed to, e. g. Half the diseases of modern civilization are due to starvation of the affections in the young (G. B. Shaw). Due is here an adjective with a complementary prepositional phrase, like liable (to), subject (to). As an adjective it needs to be attached to a noun as complement (see example above), or as part of a verbless adjective clause, e. g. A few days' temporary absence of mind due to sunstroke was... nothing to worry about (Muriel Spark).

(3) = owing to. A sentence conforming to type (2) above like He suffered a few days' absence of mind due to sunstroke can be equated with He suffered a few days' absence of mind, owing to sunstroke. In this way due to has borrowed from owing to the status of independent compound preposition, a use not uncommon even with good writers, e. g. It... didn't begin until twenty past due to a hitch (William Trevor); Due to an unlikely run of nineteens and zeros, I gained the equivalent of three hundred pounds (Graham Greene).

° The use of due to as a compound preposition is widely regarded as unacceptable. It can often be avoided by the addition of the verb to be and that, e. g. It is due to your provident care that... improvements are being made (NEB).

effect: see **affect**.

e. g., i. e.: E. g. (short for Latin *exempli gratia*) = for example, for instance; it introduces one or more typical examples of what precedes it: Many countries of Asia, e. g. India, Indonesia, and Malaysia, were once ruled by European powers. I. e. (short for Latin *id est*) = that is; it introduces an amplification or explanation of what precedes it: It was natural that the largest nation (i. e. India) should take the lead; The United States presence, i. e. the maintenance of American military personnel, in south-east Asia.

egoism, -ist(ic), egotism, -ist(ic). Egoism is the term used in Philosophy and Psychology, and denotes self-interest (often contrasted with altruism), e. g. Egoistic instincts concerned with self-preservation or the good of the Ego (Gilbert Murray). Egotism is the practice of talking or thinking excessively about oneself, self-centredness, e. g. He is petty, selfish, vain, egotistical; he is spoilt; he is a tyrant (Virginia Woolf).

° In practice the senses tend to merge, e. g. Human loves don't last, ...they are far too egoistic (Iris Murdoch); A complete egotist in all his dealings with women (Joyce Gary).

egregious, remarkable in a bad sense; gross, outrageous; used mainly with words like ass, impostor, liar, blunder, folly, waste, e. g. Wark tenderly forgives her most egregious clerical errors (Martin Amis).

either (adjective and pronoun). (1) One or other of the two, e. g. Simple explanations are for simple minds. I've no use for either (Joe Orton). (2) Each of the two, e. g. Every few kilometres on either side of the road, there were Haitian and Dominican guard-posts (Graham Greene).

° Either is frequently used in sense (2), in preference to each, with reference to a thing that comes naturally in a pair, e. g. end, hand, side. This use is sometimes ignorantly condemned but is both the older sense of either and commonly found in good writers of all periods.

elder (adjective) the earlier-born (of two related or indicated persons), e. g. The first and elder wife... returned... to Jericho (Muriel Spark); He is my elder by ten years. Eldest first-born or oldest surviving (member of family, son, daughter, etc.).

elusive (rather than elusory) is the usual adjective related to elude; illusory (rather than illusive) is the usual adjective related to illusion.

enjoin: one can enjoy an action, etc., on someone, or enjoin someone to do something; the former is more usual; e. g. To... enjoin celibacy on its laity as well as on its clergy and That enables and enjoins the citizen to earn his own living (G. B. Shaw).

enormity (1) Great wickedness (of something), e. g. Hugh was made entirely speechless... by the enormity of the proposal (Iris Murdoch); a serious crime or offence, e. g. They had met to pass sentence on Wingfield for his enormities (David Garnett).

(2) Enormousness, e. g. The war in its entire magnitude did not exist for the average civilian... The enormity of it was quite beyond most of us (G. B. Shaw).

° Sense (2) is commonly found, but is regarded by many people as incorrect.

enthuse, to show or fill with enthusiasm, is chiefly informal.

° equally as (+ adjective) should not be used for equally, e. g. in How to apply it in a calm, unruffled manner was equally as important (G. F. Newman), or for as, e. g. The Government are equally as guilty as the Opposition.

event: in the event of is followed by a noun or gerund, e. g. In the event of the earl's death, the title will lapse.

° In the event that, treated as a compound conjunction, is ungainly and avoided by good writers; it is even worse with that omitted, e. g. In the event the car overturns.

ever. When placed after a *wh*-question word in order to intensify it, ever should be written separately, e. g. Where ever have you been?, when ever is he coming?, who ever would have thought it?, why ever did you do it?, how ever shall I escape? When used with a relative pronoun or adverb to give it indefinite or general force, ever is written as one word with it, e. g. Wherever you go I'll follow; whenever he washes up he breaks something; there's a reward for whoever (not whomever) finds it; whatever else you do, don't get lost; however it's done, it's difficult.

evidence, evince. Evidence (verb), to serve as evidence for the existence or truth of, e. g. There was an innate refinement... about Gerty which was unmistakably evidenced in her delicate hands (James Joyce). Evince, to show that one has a (hidden or unseen) quality, e. g. Highly evolved sentiments and needs (sometimes said to be distinctively human, though birds and animals... evince them) (G. B. Shaw).

° Evince should not be confused with evoke to call up (a response, a feeling, etc.), e. g. A timely and generous act which evoked afresh outburst of emotion (James Joyce).

exceedingly, extremely; excessively, beyond measure, immoderately, e. g. The excessively rational terms employed by people with a secret panic (Muriel Spark).

excepting (preposition) is only used after not and always.

exceptionable to which exception may be taken; unexceptionable with which no fault may be found, e. g. The opposite claim would seem to him unexceptionable even if he disagreed with it (George Orwell).

° Do not confuse with (un)exceptional, that is (not) an exception, unusual.

excess. In excess of "to a greater amount or degree than" forms an adverbial phrase.

° Prefer more than where the phrase qualified is the subject or object, e. g. in The Data Centre, which processes in excess of 1200 jobs per week.

expect (1) in the sense "suppose, think" is informal; (2) see **anticipate**.

explicit, express Explicit, distinctly expressing all that is meant, leaving nothing implied, e. g. I had been too tactful,... too vague... But I now saw that I ought to have been more explicit (Iris Murdoch); express, definite, unmistakable in import, e. g. Idolatry fulsome enough to irritate Jonson into an express disavowal of it (G. B. Shaw).

exposure (to) may be use figuratively to mean "being made subject (to an influence, etc.)" but should not be used for experience (of), e. g. in Candidates who have had exposure to North American markets.

express (adjective): see **explicit**.

facility in the sense "ease in doing something", e. g. I knew that I had a facility with words (George Orwell), should not be confused with a similar sense of faculty, viz. "a particular kind of ability", e. g. Hess... had that odd faculty, peculiar to lunatics, of falling into strained positions (Rebecca West).

factious: see **factitious**.

factitious made for a special purpose; not natural; artificial; e. g. Heroic tragedy is decadent because it is factitious; it substitutes violent emotionalism for emotion (and) the purple patch for poetry (L. C. Knights); fictitious, feigned, simulated; imaginary, e. g. Afraid of being suspected, he gave a fictitious account of his movements.

farther, farthest: though originally interchangeable with further, furthest, these words are now only used where the sense of "distance" is involved, e. g. One whose actual dwelling lay presumably amid the farther mysteries of the cosmos (J. I. M. Stewart).

° Even in this sense many people prefer further, furthest.

feasible capable of being done, achieved, or dealt with, e. g. Young people believing that niceness and innocence are politically as well as morally feasible (J. I. M. Stewart).

° It is sometimes used to mean "possible" or "probable"; but whichever of these two words is appropriate should be used instead.

fewer: see **less**.

fictitious: see **factitious**.

flammable, easily set on fire; preferable as a warning of danger to inflammable, which may be mistaken for a negative (= not easily set on fire). The real negatives are non-flammable and non-inflammable.

flaunt, to display proudly or ostentatiously, e. g. The wicked flaunt themselves on every side (NEB); As though to defy reason, as though to flaunt a divine indestructibility, the question will not go away: is God? (Tom Stoppard).

° Do not confuse with flout "to disobey openly and scornfully", e. g. His deliberate flouting of one still supposedly iron rule (Frederic Raphael): flout should have been used by the public figure reported as having said Those wanting to flaunt the policy would recognize that public opinion was not behind them.

following, as a sequel to, consequent on, is used in two ways. (1) Properly, as an adjective, dependent on a preceding noun, e. g. During demonstrations following the hanging of two British soldiers. (2) By extension, as an independent quasi-preposition, e. g. The prologue was written by the company following an incident witnessed by them.

° Many people regard use (2) as erroneous (cf. due to (3)). It can also give rise to ambiguity, e. g. Police arrested a man following the hunt. In any case, following should not be used as a mere synonym for after (e. g. Following supper they went to bed).

for: The subject of a clause of which the verb is the to-infinitive is normally preceded by for, e. g. For him to stay elsewhere is unthinkable (contrast that he should stay elsewhere...) But if the clause is a direct object in a main sentence, for is omitted: hence I could not bear for him to stay elsewhere. (Daily Mail) is non-standard.

forensic (1) of or used in courts of law, e. g. forensic medicine, forensic science; (2) of or involving forensic science, e. g. An object which has been sent for forensic examination.

° Sense (2) is often deplored as an illogical extension, but is widespread.

former (latter). When referring the first (last) of three or more, the first (the last) should be used, not the former (the latter).

fortuitous means "happening by chance, accidental", e. g. His presence is not fortuitous. He has a role to play (Andre Brink).

° It does not mean either "fortunate" or "timely", as (incorrectly) in He could not believe it. It was too fortuitous to be chance.

fractious, unruly; peevish; e. g. Block tackle and a strangling pully will bring your lion to heel, no matter how fractious (James Joyce).

° Do not confuse with factious "given to, or proceeding from, faction", e. g. In spite of such a divisive past and a fractious (correctly, factious) present (New York Times).

fruition, fulfilment, especially in the phrase be brought to, come to, grow to, reach, etc. fruition, once stigmatized as a misuse, is now standard.

fulsome is a pejorative term, applied to nouns such as flattery, servility, affection, etc., and means "cloying, excessive, disgusting by excess", e. g. They listened to fulsome speeches, doggedly translated by a wilting Olga Fiodorovna (Beryl Bainbridge).

° Fulsome is not now regarded as a synonym of copious, though this was its original meaning.

further, furthest: see **farther, farthest**.

geriatric means "pertaining to the health and welfare of the elderly"; it is incorrect to use it as a synonym of senile or elderly, or as a noun meaning "elderly or senile person".

gourmand, glutton; gourmet, connoisseur of good food.

graffiti is the plural of graffito; it is not a singular mass noun.

half. The use of half in expressions of time to mean half-past is indigenous to Britain and has been remarked on since the 1930s, e. g. We'd easily get the half-five bus (William Trevor); it is to be distinguished from the use of half + the succeeding hour (i. e. half-nine = half-past eight) in parts of Scotland and Ireland. It remains non-standard.

hardly (1) Hardly is not used with negative constructions.

° Expressions like Without hardly a word of comment (substitute with hardly or almost without a word..) and I couldn't hardly tell what he meant (substitute I could hardly tell...) are non-standard.

(2) Hardly and scarcely are followed by when or before, not than, e. g. Hardly had Grimes left the house when a tall young man... presented himself at the front door (Evelyn Waugh).

heir apparent, one whose right of inheritance cannot be superseded by the birth of another heir; as opposed to an heir presumptive, whose right can be so superseded.

° Heir apparent does not mean "seeming heir".

help. More than, or as little as, one can help are illogical but established idioms, e. g. They will not respect more than they can help treaties extracted from them under duress (Winston Churchill).

hoi polloi can be preceded by the, even though hoi represents the Greek definite article, e. g. The screens with which working archaeologists baffle the hoi polloi (Frederic Raphael).

° **homogenous** is a frequent error for homogeneous, and is probably due partly to the form of the related verb homogenize. A word homogenous exists, but has a technical meaning that is quite different and very restricted in its use. Homogeneous means “of the same kind, uniform”, e. g. The style throughout was homogeneous but the authors’ names were multiform (Evelyn Waugh).

hopefully, thankfully. These adverbs are used in two ways: (1) As adverbs of manner = “in a hopeful/thankful way”, “with hope/gratitude”, e. g. The prevailing mentality of that deluded time was still hopefully parliamentary (G. B. Shaw); When it thankfully dawned on her that the travel agency would be open (Muriel Spark). (2) As sentence adverbs, outside the clause structure and conveying the speaker’s comment on the statement, e. g. Hopefully they will be available in the autumn (Guardian); The editor, thankfully, has left them as they were written (TLS).

° Use (2) is widely regarded as unacceptable. The main reason is that other commenting sentence adverbs, such as regrettably, fortunately, etc., can be converted to the form it is regrettable, fortunate, etc., that—, but these are to be resolved as it is to be hoped or one hopes that— and one is thankful that—., (The same objection could be, but is not, made to happily and unhappily which mean one is (un)happy not it is (un)happy that—, e. g. in Unhappily children do hurt flies (Jean Rhys).) A further objection is that absurdity or ambiguity can arise from the interplay of senses (1) and (2), e. g. There is also a screen, hopefully forming a backdrop to the whole stage (Tom Stoppard); Any decision to trust Egypt... and move forward hopefully toward peace... in the Middle East (Guardian Weekly). This use of hopefully probably arose as a translation of German hoffentlich, used in the same way, and first became popular in America in the late 1960s; the same American provenance, but not the German, holds good for thankfully. It is recommended that sense (2) should be restricted to informal contexts.

i. e.: see **e. g., i. e.**

if in certain constructions (usually linking two adjectives or adverbs that qualify the same noun or verb) can be ambiguous, e. g. A great play, if not the greatest, by this author.

° It is best to paraphrase such sentences as, e. g., either A great play, though not the greatest by this author or A great play, perhaps (or very nearly) the greatest by this author.

ignorant is better followed by of than by about, e. g. Is this famous teacher of Israel ignorant of such things? (NEB).

ilk. Of that ilk is a Scots term, meaning “of the same place, territorial designation, or name”, e. g. Wemyss of that ilk = Wemyss of Wemyss.

° By a misunderstanding ilk has come to mean “sort, lot” (usually pejorative), e. g. Joan Baez and other vocalists of that ilk (David Lodge). This should be avoided in formal English.

ill used predicatively = “unwell”; sick used predicatively = “about to or likely to vomit, in the act of vomiting”, e. g. I felt sick; I was violently sick; used attributively = “unwell”, e. g. a sick man, except in collocations like sick bay, sick leave.

° It is non-standard to use ill predicatively for “in the act of vomiting” or sick predicatively for “unwell” (though the latter is standard Amer.), except in the phrase off sick “away on sick leave”.

illusion: see **delusion.**

illusory: see **elusive.**

impact used figuratively, is best confined to contexts in which someone or something is imagined as striking another, e. g. The most dynamic colour combination if used too often loses its impact (i. e., on the eye). It is weakened if used as a mere synonym for effect, impression, or influence.

impedance. The total resistance of an electric circuit to the flow of alternating current.

° Do not confuse with impediment, a hindrance, a defect (in speech, etc.), e. g. Convinced of the existence of a serious impediment to his marriage (Evelyn Waugh).

imply, infer. Imply (1) to involve the truth or existence of; (2) to express indirectly, insinuate, hint at. Infer (1) to reach (an opinion), deduce, from facts and reasoning, e. g. She left it to my intelligence to infer her meaning. I inferred it all right (W).

Somerset Maugham); He is a philosopher's God, logically inferred from self-evident premises (Tom Stoppard). (2) = imply, sense (2), e. g. I have inferred once, and I repeat, that Limehouse is the most overrated excitement in London (H. V. Morton).

° Sense (2) of infer is generally unacceptable, since it is the reverse of the primary sense of the verb.

imprimatur, official licence to print.

° Do not confuse with imprint, the name of the publisher/printer, place of publication/printing, etc., on the title-page or at the end of a book.

inapt, inept. Inapt = "not apt", "unsuitable"; inept = (1) without aptitude, unskilful, e. g. Fox-trots and quicksteps, at which he had been so inept (David Lodge); (2) inappropriate, e. g. Not much less than famous for looking ineptly dressed (Anthony Powell); (3) absurd, silly, e. g. Here I was, awkward and tongue-tied, and all the time in danger of saying something inept or even rude (Siegfried Sassoon).

inchoate means "just begun, underdeveloped", e. g. Trying to give his work a finished look—and all the time it's pathetically obvious... that the stuff's fatally inchoate (John Wain).

° It does not mean chaotic or incoherent.

include: see **comprise** (1)

industrial action is an imprecise, often inappropriate, and sometimes socially divisive expression. If possible, use strike, work-to-rule, overtime ban, etc., as appropriate.

infer: see imply

inflammable: see **flammable**.

inflict, afflict. One inflicts something on someone or afflicts someone with something; something is inflicted on one, or one is afflicted with something.

° Do not use inflict with where afflict with is meant, e. g. in The miners are still out, and industry is inflicted (correctly, afflicted) with a kind of creeping paralysis.

ingenious, clever at inventing, etc. ; noun ingenuity; ingenious open, frank, innocent; noun ingenuousness.

insignia is a plural noun, e. g. Fourteen different airline insignia (David Lodge); its singular, rarely encountered, is insigne.

insinuating, a blend of insinuation and innuendo, at best only jocular.

intense, existing, having some quality, in a high degree, e. g. The intense evening sunshine (Iris Murdoch); intensive employing much effort, concentrated, e. g. Intensive care; The intensive geological surveys of the Sahara (Margaret Drabble).

interface (noun) (1) A surface forming a common boundary between two regions, e. g. The concepts of surface tension apply to the interfaces between solid and solid, solid and liquid (etc.).

(2) A piece of equipment in which interaction occurs between two systems, processes, etc., e. g. Modular interfaces can easily be designed to adapt the general-purpose computer to the equipment.

(3) A point or area of interaction between two systems, organizations, or disciplines, e. g. The interface between physics and music is of direct relevance to... the psychological effects of hearing (Nature).

° Sense (3) is widely regarded as unacceptable, since it is often debased into a high-sounding synonym for boundary, meeting-point, interaction, liaison, link, etc., e. g. The need for the interface of lecturer and student will diminish.

interface (verb), to connect (equipment) with (equipment) by means of an interface; (of equipment) to be connected by an interface; e. g. A multiplexed analog-to-digital converter interfaced to a PDP 11-40 computer (Lancet).

° Interface should not be used as a synonym for interact (with), as, e. g., in The ideal candidate will have the ability to interface effectively with the heads of staff of various departments.

internment, confinement (from verb intern).

° Do not confuse with interment, burial (from verb inter).

into: it is common informally, but incorrect in formal prose, to use *in* where *into* is required, especially after verbs of motion, e. g. Practically knocked me over *in* his eagerness to get in the house (David Lodge).

invite (noun = "invitation"), although over three centuries old, remains informal (and somewhat non-standard) only.

ironic, ironical, ironically. The noun *irony* can mean (1) a way of speaking in which the intended meaning (for those with insight) is the opposite to, or very different from, that expressed by the words used (and apprehended by the victim of the irony); or (2) a condition of affairs or events that is the opposite of what might be expected, especially when the outcome of an action appears as if it is in mockery of the agent's intention. The adjectives *ironic*, *ironical*, and the adverb *ironically* are commonly used in sense (1) of irony, e. g. Ironical silent apology for the absence of naked women and tanks of gin from the amenities (Kingsley Amis). They are also frequently found in sense (2), e. g. The outcome was *ironic*. The expenditure of British treasure served to rearm the United States rather than to strengthen Great Britain (A. J. P. Taylor); The fact that after all she had been faithful to me was *ironic* (Graham Greene).

° Some people object to this use, especially when *ironically* is used to introduce a trivial oddity, e. g. It was *ironic* that he thought himself locked out when the key was in his pocket all the time.

kind of, sort of (1) A *kind of*, *sort of* should not be followed by a *before* the noun, e. g. a *kind of* shock, not a *kind of a* shock. (2) *Kind of*, *sort of*, etc., followed by a plural noun, are often treated as plural and qualified by plural words like *these*, *those*, or followed by a plural verb, e. g. They would be on those *sort of* terms (Anthony Powell). This is widely regarded as incorrect except in informal use: substitute *that* (etc.) *kind* (or *sort*) of or of *that kind* (or *sort*), e. g. *this kind of* car is unpopular or *cars of this kind* are unpopular. (3) *Kind of*, *sort of* used adverbially, e. g. I *kind of* expected it, are informal only.

kudos is a mass noun like *glory* or *fame*, e. g. He's made a lot of *kudos* out of the strike (Evelyn Waugh).

° It is not a plural noun and there is no singular *kudo*.

latter: see **former**.

laudable, praiseworthy, e. g. The Opposition's abstention from criticism of the Government in this crisis was *laudable*; *laudatory*, expressing praise, e. g. One politician's remarks about another are not always *laudatory*.

lay (verb), past *laid*, = "put down, arrange", etc. is only transitive, e. g. Lay her on the bed; They *laid* her on the bed; (reflexive, somewhat archaic) I will both *lay* me down in peace, and sleep (Authorized Version).

° To use *lay* intransitively, to mean "lie", e. g. She wants to *lay* down; She was *laying* on the bed is non-standard, even though fairly common in spoken English. Cf. **lie**.

leading question, in Law, is a question so worded that it prompts a person to give the desired answer, e. g. The solicitor... at once asked me some *leading questions*... I had to try to be both forthcoming and discreet (C. P. Snow).

° It does not mean a "principal" (or "loaded" or "searching") question.

learn with a person as the object, = "teach" is non-standard, or occasionally jocular as in I'll *learn* you.

less (adjective) is the comparative of (a) *little*, and, like the *latter*, is used with mass nouns, e. g. I owe him *little* duty and *less* love (Shakespeare); *fewer* is the comparative of (a) *few*, and both are used with plural countable nouns, e. g. *Few* people have their houses broken *into*; and *fewer* still have them burnt (G. B. Shaw).

° *Less* quite often used informally as the comparative of *few*, probably on the analogy of *more*, which is the comparative both of *much* (with mass nouns) and *many* (with plural countable nouns), e. g. I wish that they would send *less* delicacies and frills and some more plain and substantial things (Susan Hill). This is regarded as incorrect in formal English.

° *Less* should not be used as the comparative of *small* (or some similar adjective such as *low*), e. g. a lower price not a *less* price.

lesser, not so great as the other or the rest, e. g. He opened The Times with the rich crackle that drowns all lesser sounds (John Galsworthy).

° Lesser should not be used when the meaning is “not so big” or “not so large”: its opposition to greater is essential. It cannot replace smaller in A smaller prize will probably be offered.

lest is very formal (in ordinary English, so that... not or in case is used); it is followed by should or (in exalted style) the subjunctive, e. g. Lest the eye wander aimlessly, a Doric temple stood by the water's edge (Evelyn Waugh); Lest some too sudden gesture or burst of emotion should turn the petals brown (Patrick White).

let, to allow (followed by the bare infinitive) is rarely used in the passive: the effect is usually unidiomatic, e. g. Halfdan's two sons... are let owe their lives to a trick (Gwyn Jones).

Allowed to is usual.

liable (1) can be followed by to + a noun or noun phrase in the sense “subject to, likely to suffer from”, or by an infinitive; (2) carries the implication that the action or experience expressed by the infinitive is undesirable, e. g. Receiving in the bedroom is liable to get a woman talked about (Tom Stoppard); (3) can indicate either the mere possibility, or the habituality, of what is expressed by the verb, e. g. The cruellest question which a novelist is liable to be asked (Frederic Raphael); The kind of point that one is always liable to miss (George Orwell).

° The sense “likely to” is Amer., e. g. Boston is liable to be the ultimate place for holding the convention. Contrast apt.

lie (verb) past lay, lain, = “recline” “be situated”, is only intransitive, e. g. Lie down on the bed; The ship lay at anchor until yesterday; Her left arm, on which she had lain all night, was numb.

° To use lie transitively, to mean “lay”, e. g. Lie her on the bed is non-standard. The past lay and participle lain are quite often wrongly used for laid out of over-correctness, e. g. He had lain this peer's honour in the dust. Cf. **lay**.

ligature: see **digraph**.

like, indicating resemblance between two things: (1) It is normally used as an adjective followed by a noun, noun phrase, or pronoun (in the objective case), e. g. A man with human frailties like our own (NEB); He loathes people like you and me (not.. and I).

It can be used to mean “such as” (introducing a particular example of a class about which something is said), e. g. With a strongly patterned dress like that you shouldn't really wear any jewellery (Iris Murdoch).

° In formal contexts some people prefer such as to be used if more than one example is mentioned, e. g. British composers such as Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and Britten.

(2) It is often used as a conjunction with a dependent clause, e. g. Everything went wrong... like it does in dreams (Iris Murdoch); Not with a starched apron like the others had (Jean Rhys), or with an adverbial phrase, e. g. With glossy hair, black, and a nose like on someone historical (Patrick White); It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass (Jean Rhys).

° Although this is not uncommon in formal writing, it is often “condemned as vulgar or slovenly” (OED), and is best avoided, except informally. Use as, e. g. Are you going to kill me as you killed the Egyptian? (NEB), or recast the sentence, e. g. A costume like those that the others wore.

(3) It is often informally used to mean “as if”, e. g. The light at either end of the tunnel was like you were looking through a sheet of yellow cellophane (Patrick White); You wake like someone hit you on the head (T. S. Eliot).

° This use is very informal.

likely (adverb), in the sense “probably”, must be preceded by more, most, or very, e. g. Its inhabitants... very likely do make that claim for it (George Orwell).

° The use without the qualifying adverb is Amer., e. g. They'll likely turn ugly (Eugene O'Neill).

linguist means “one whose subject is linguistics” as well as “one skilled in the use of languages”; there is no other suitable term (linguistician is disfavoured).

literally. In very informal speech, literally is used as an intensifying adverb without meaning apart from its emotive force.

° This use should be avoided in writing or formal speech, since it almost invariably involves absurdity, e. g. The dwarfs mentioned here are literally within a stone's throw of the Milky Way (New Scientist). The appropriate use is seen in She emerged, fully armed, from the head of Zeus who was suffering from a literally splitting headache (Frederic Raphael).

loan (verb) has some justification where a businesslike loan is in question, e. g. The gas industry is using a major part of its profits to benefit the PSBR by loaning money to Government (Observer). Otherwise it is a needless variant for lend.

locate can mean “discover the place where someone or somebody is”, e. g. She had located and could usefully excavate her Saharan highland emporium (Margaret Drabble); it should not be used to mean merely “find”.

lot. A lot of, though somewhat informal, is acceptable in serious writing; lots of is not.

luncheon is an especially formal variant of lunch; the latter should normally be used, except in fixed expressions like luncheon voucher.

luxuriant, growing profusely, prolific, profuse, exuberant, e. g. His hair does not seem to have been luxuriant even in its best days (G. B. Shaw).

° Do not confuse with luxurious (the adjective relating to luxury), e. g. The food, which had always been good, was now luxurious (C. P. Snow).

majority can mean “the greater number of a countable set”, and is then followed by the plural, e. g. The majority of the plays produced were failures (G. B. Shaw).

° Great (or huge, vast, etc.) can precede majority in this sense, e. g. The first thing you gather from the vast majority of the speakers (C. S. Lewis); but not greater, greatest (since “more” is already contained in the word).

° Majority is not used to mean “the greater part of an uncountable mass”, e. g. I was doing most (or the greater part) of the cooking (not the majority of the cooking).

masterful, domineering, e. g. People might say she was tyrannical, domineering, masterful (Virginia Woolf).

° Do not confuse with masterly, very skilful, e. g. A masterly compound of friendly argumentation and menace (Iris Murdoch).

maximize, to make as great as possible.

° It should not be used for “to make as good, easy, (etc). as possible” or “to make the most of” as in To maximize customer service; To maximize this situation.

means (1) Money resources: a plural noun, e. g. You might find out from Larry... what his means are (G. B. Shaw).

(2) That by which a result is brought about. It may be used either as a singular noun or as a plural one, without any change in form, e. g. (singular) The press was, at this time, the only means of.. influencing opinion at home (A. J. P. Taylor); (plural) All the time-honoured means of meeting the opposite sex (Frederic Raphael).

° Beware of mixing singular and plural, as in The right to resist by every (singular) means that are (plural) consonant with the law of God.

media, agency, means (of communication etc.), is a plural noun, e. g.

The communication media inflate language because they dare not be honest (Anthony Burgess). Its singular is medium (rare except in mass medium).

° Media cannot be treated as a singular noun or form a plural medias. Medium (in Spiritualism) forms its plural in -s.

militate: see **mitigate**.

milliard: see **billion**.

minimize, to reduce to, or estimate at, the smallest possible amount or degree, e. g. Each side was inclined to minimize its own losses in battle.

° It does not mean lessen and therefore cannot be qualified by adverbs like greatly.

minority. Large, vast, etc. minority can mean either "a considerable number who are yet less than half", or "a number who are very much the minority": it is best to avoid the ambiguity.

mitigate, appease, alleviate moderate (usually transitive), e. g. Its heat mitigated by the strong sea-wind (Anthony Burgess).

° Do not confuse with militate (intransitive) against, to serve as a strong influence against, e. g. The very fact that Leamas was a professional could militate against his interests (John le Carr.); it is only the idea of countering that they have in common.

momentum, impetus. ° Do not confuse with moment "importance", e. g. He has marked his entrance with an error of some moment (not momentum).

more than one is followed by a singular verb and is referred back to by singular pronouns, e. g. More than one popular dancing man inquired anxiously at his bank (Evelyn Waugh).

motivate, to cause (a person) to act in a particular way.

° It does not mean "supply a motive, justify", e. g. (wrongly) in The publisher motivates the slim size of these volumes by claiming it makes them more likely to be read.

mutual (1) Felt, done, etc., by each to(wards) the other, e. g. The mutual affection of father and son was rather touching (W. Somerset Maugham).

(2) Standing in a (specified) relation to each other, e. g. Kings and subjects, mutual foes (Shelley). This sense is now rare.

(3) Common to two (or more) parties, e. g. a mutual friend or acquaintance.

° Sense (3) is acceptable in a small number of collocations, such as the two indicated, in which common might be ambiguous; cf. They had already formed a small island of mutual Englishness (Muriel Spark): common Englishness might imply vulgarity.

Otherwise common is preferable, e. g. in By common (rather than mutual) consent the Chinese meal had been abandoned.

nature. ° Avoid using adjective + nature as a periphrasis for an abstract noun, e. g. write The dangerousness of the spot, not The dangerous nature of the spot.

need (this needs changing, etc.): see **want**.

neighbourhood. In the neighbourhood of is an unnecessarily cumbersome periphrasis for round about.

neither (adverb). ° It is non-standard to use it instead of either to strengthen a preceding negative, e. g. There were no books either (not neither).

non-flammable: see **flammable**.

normalcy is chiefly Amer. ° Prefer normality.

not only: see **only** (4).

no way (1) (Initially, followed inversion of verb and subject) = "not at all, by no means", e. g. No way will you stop prices or unemployment going up again (James Callaghan). ° Informal only.

(2) (Emphatic) = "certainly not", e. g. "Did you go up in the elevator?" "No way." ° Chiefly Amer.; informal only.

number. A number (of) is constructed with the plural, the number (of) the singular, e. g. Many of you are feeble and sick, and a number have died (NEB); The number of men who make a definite contribution to anything whatsoever is small (Virginia Woolf).

obligate (verb) is in Britain only used in Law.

° There is no gain in using it (as often in Amer. usage) for oblige.

oblivious, in the sense "unaware of, unconscious of", may be followed by of or to, e. g. "When the summer comes," said Lord Marchmain, oblivious of the deep corn and swelling fruit.. outside his windows (Evelyn Waugh); Rose seemed oblivious to individuals (Angus Wilson).

° This sense, which developed from the older sense "forgetful", is sometimes censured, but is now fully established in the language.

of used for have: see **of**, in topic 1.51 and **have** in topic 2.31.

off of used for the preposition off e. g. Picked him off of the floor, is non-standard.

one (pronoun) (1) "any person, the speaker or writer as representing people in general" has one, one's, and oneself as objective, possessive, and reflexive forms.

° These forms should be used to point back to a previous use of one, e. g. One always did, in foreign parts, become friendly with one's fellow-countrymen more quickly than one did at home (Muriel Spark). One should not be mixed with he (him, his, etc.) (acceptable Amer. usage) or we, you, etc.

(2) = single thing or person, following any and every; the resulting phrase is written as two words and is distinct from anyone, everyone (= anybody, everybody), e. g. Any one (of these) will do; Perhaps every one of my conclusions would be negated by other observers (George Orwell).

ongoing has a valid use as adjective meaning "that goes on", i. e. "that is happening and will continue" (just as oncoming means "that comes on"), e. g. The refugee problem in our time is an ongoing problem (Robert Kee).

° The vague or tautologous use of ongoing should be avoided, as in the cliché, ongoing situation, or in We have an ongoing military relationship which we are continuing (Guardian).

only (1) In spoken English, it usual to place only between subject and verb, e. g. He only saw Bill yesterday: intonation is used to show whether only limits he, saw, Bill, or yesterday.

(2) It is an established idiom that, in a sentence containing only + verb + another item, in the absence of special intonation, only is understood as limiting, not the subject or verb, but the other item. I only want some water is the natural way of saying I want only some water. If there is more than one item following the verb, only often limits the item nearest the end of the sentence, e. g. A type of mind that can only accept ideas if they are put in the language he would use himself (Doris Lessing) (= only if...); but not always, e. g. The captain was a thin unapproachable man... who only appeared once at table (Graham Greene) (= only once). This idiom is tacitly recognized by all good writers, e. g. They only met on the most formal occasions (C. P. Snow); The contractors were only waiting for the final signature to start their work of destruction (Evelyn Waugh); The Nonconformist sects only influenced minorities (George Orwell).

(3) Despite the idiom described under (2), there are often sentences in which confusion can arise, e. g. Patrick only talked as much as he did, which was not as much as all that, to keep the ball in the air (Kingsley Amis), where at first sight only might appear to limit he (referring to some other person) but really limits to keep... air. If confusion or ambiguity is likely to arise, only should be placed before the item which it limits, e. g. They sought to convert others only by the fervour of their sentiments and the earnestness of their example (Frederic Raphael); The coalminer is second in importance only to the man who ploughs the soil (George Orwell).

(4) Not only should always be placed next to the item which it qualifies, and not in the position before the verb. This is a fairly common slip, e. g. Katherine's marriage not only kept her away, but at least two of Mr. March's cousins (C. P. Snow); kept not only her would be better. If placing it before the verb is inevitable, the verb should be repeated after but (also), e. g. It not only brings the coal out but brings the roof down as well (George Orwell).

orient, orientate. In meaning the two words are virtually synonymous. In general, as opposed to technical, use, orientate seems to be predominant, but either is acceptable.

other than can be used where other is an adjective or pronoun, e. g. He was no other than the rightful lord; The acts of any person other than myself.

° Other cannot be treated as an adverb: otherwise than should be used instead, e. g. in It is impossible to refer to them other than very cursorily.

out used as a preposition instead of out of, e. g. You should of [sic] pushed him out the nest long ago (character in work by Muriel Spark), is non-standard.

outside of (1) = apart from (a sense outside cannot have) is informal only, e. g. The need of some big belief outside of art (Roger Fry, in a letter).

(2) = beyond the limits of, e. g. The most important such facility outside of Japan (Gramophone).

° In sense (2) outside alone is preferable: the of is redundant.

outstanding. ° Do not use in the sense “remaining undetermined, unpaid, etc. ” in contexts where ambiguity with the sense “eminent, striking” can arise, e. g. The other outstanding result (in sport).

overly, excessively, too, is still regarded as an unassimilated Americanism, e. g. Those overly rationalistic readers (TLS).

° Use excessively, too, or over- instead; for not overly, not very or none too make satisfactory replacements.

overseas (adjective and adverb) is now more usual than *oversea*.

overview is an Americanism that has not found acceptance in Britain: survey, review, or outline are adequate substitutes.

owing to, unlike *due to*, has for long been established as a compound preposition, e. g. My rooms became uninhabitable, owing to a burst gas-pipe (C. P. Snow).

° Owing to the fact that should be avoided: use a conjunction like *because*.

pace means “despite (someone)’s opinion”, e. g. Our civilization, *pace* Chesterton, is founded on coal (George Orwell).

° It does not mean “according to (someone)” or “notwithstanding (something)”.

parameter. (1) (In technical use especially in Mathematics and Computing) (roughly) a quantity constant in the case considered, but varying between different cases.

(2) (In extended use) a defining characteristic, especially one that can be measured, e. g. The three major parameters of colour—brightness, hue, and saturation.

(3) (Loosely) a limit or boundary, e. g. The considerable element of indeterminacy which exists within the parameters of the parole system (The Times); an aspect or feature, e. g. The main parameters of the problem.

° Use (3) is a popular dilution of the word’s meaning, probably influenced (at least in the first quotation) by *perimeter*; it should be avoided.

parricide refers to the killing of one’s father, one’s close relative, or a person regarded as sacred, or to treason; *patricide* only to the killing of one’s father.

part (on the part of): see **behalf**.

partially, partly.

Apart from the (rare) use of *partially* to mean “in a partial or biased way”, these two words are largely interchangeable. Note, however, that *partly... partly* is more usual than *partially... partially*, e. g. *Partly in verse and partly in prose*.

peer, as in *to have no peer*, means “equal”, not “superior”.

pence is sometimes informally used as a singular, e. g. *How Fine Fare, on lard, is one pence up on Sainsbury’s* (Malcolm Bradbury).

° This use is very informal. Normally *penny* should be used in the singular.

perquisite (informal abbreviation *perk*) a casual profit, incidental benefit attaching to an employment, thing to which a person has sole right, e. g. *Free travel by train was a perquisite of railway managerial staff*.

° Do not confuse with *prerequisite* “something required as a previous condition (for, of, or to something)”, e. g. *Her mere comforting presence beside me which was already a prerequisite to peaceful sleep* (Lynne Reid Banks).

persistency is limited in sense to “the action of persisting in one’s course”, e. g. *They made repeated requests for compensation, but an official apology was the only reward for their persistency*; *persistence* is sometimes used in that sense, but more often for “continued existence”, e. g. *One of the more surprising things about the life-ways of primitive societies is their persistence* (Sean O’Faolain).

perspicuous, easily understood, clearly expressed; expressing things clearly; similarly *perspicuity*; e. g. *There is nothing more desirable in composition than perspicuity* (Southey).

° Do not confuse with *perspicacious*, having or showing insight, and *perspicacity*, e. g. *Her perspicacity at having guessed his passion* (Vita Sackville-West).

petit bourgeois, petty bourgeois. The meaning (and with many people, the pronunciation) of these is the same. If the former is used, the correct French inflections should be added: *petits bourgeois* (plural), *petite(s) bourgeoisie(s)* (feminine (plural)); also

petite bourgeoisie. With petty bourgeois it should be remembered that the sense of the original French petit is not English petty, although that may be one of its main connotations.

phenomena is the plural of phenomenon.

° It cannot be used as a singular and cannot form a plural phenomenas.

picaresque (of a style of fiction) dealing with the adventures of rogues.

° It does not mean “transitory” or “roaming”.

pivotal, being that on which anything pivots or turns, e. g. The pardon of Richard Nixon was pivotal to those who made up their minds at the last minute.

° Do not use it merely to mean vital.

plaid, shawl-like garment; tartan, woollen cloth with distinctive pattern; the pattern itself.

° **plus** (conjunction) = “and in addition”, is an Amer. colloquialism of little acceptability, e. g. —have big names at big savings. Plus you get one year manufacturer's guarantee (Advertisement).

polity, a form of civil government, e. g. A republican polity; a state.

° It does not mean policy or politics.

portentous can mean: (1) Like a portent, ominous, e. g. Fiery-eyed with a sense of portentous utterance (Muriel Spark). (2) Prodigious, e. g. Every movement of his portentous frame (James Joyce). (3) Solemn, ponderous, and somewhat pompous, e. g. Our last conversation must have sounded to you rather portentous (Iris Murdoch); A portentous commentary on Holy Scripture (Lord Hailsham).

° Sense (3) is sometimes criticized, but is an established, slightly jocular use.

° The form portentious (due to the influence of pretentious) is erroneous.

post, pre. Their use as full words (not prefixes) to mean “after” and “before” is unnecessary and disagreeable, e. g. in Post the Geneva meeting of Opec (Daily Telegraph); Pre my being in office (Henry Kissinger).

practicable, practical. When applied to things, practicable means “able to be done”, e. g. (with the negative impracticable), Schemes which look very fine on paper, but which, as we well know, are impracticable (C. S. Lewis); practical “concerned with practice, suitable for use, suited to the conditions”, e. g. Having considered the problem, he came up with several practical suggestions; It is essential that the plan should cover all the practical details.

pre: see **post, pre**.

precipitous, like a precipice, e. g. Our rooms were... reached by a precipitous marble staircase (Evelyn Waugh).

° Do not confuse with precipitate, hasty, rash, e. g. They were all a little out of breath from precipitate arrival (Patrick White).

predicate (verb) (1) (Followed of) to assert as a property of, e. g. That easy Bohemianism—conventionally predicated of the “artistic” temperament (J. I. M. Stewart). (2) (Followed by on) to found or base (something) on, e. g. A new conception of reality... predicated on dissatisfaction with formalist literature (TLS) ° Sense (2) tends to sound pretentious. Use found, or base, on.

pre-empt (1) To obtain beforehand, secure for oneself in advance, e. g.

Sound allows the mind an inventive role systematically pre-empted by the cinema (Frederic Raphael). (2) To preclude, forestall, e. g. The Nazi regime by its own grotesque vileness pre-empted fictional effort (Listener).

° Sense (2) is better expressed by a verb such as preclude or forestall.

° Pre-empt is not a synonym for prevent.

prefer. The rejected alternative introduced by to, e. g. Men preferred darkness to light (NEB). But when the rejected alternative is an infinitive, it is preceded by rather than (not than alone), e. g. I'd prefer to be stung to death rather than to wake up... with half of me shot away (John Osborne).

preferable to means “more desirable than” and is therefore intensified by far, greatly, or much, not more, e. g. After a hundred and eighty (skips) an unclear head seemed much preferable to more skips (Kingsley Amis).

preference. The alternatives are introduced by *for* and *over*, e. g. The preference for a single word over a phrase or clause (Anthony Burgess); but *in preference* is followed by *to*, e. g. Both were sensitive to artistic impressions musical in preference to plastic or pictorial (James Joyce).

prejudice (1) = bias, is followed by *against* or *in favour of*; (2) = detriment, is followed by *to*; (3) = injury, is followed by *of* (in the phrase *to the prejudice of*).

prepared: *to be prepared to*, *to be willing to*, has been criticized as officialese by some authorities, but is now established usage, e. g. One should kill oneself, which, of course, I was not prepared to do (Cyril Connolly).

prerequisite see **perquisite**.

prescribe, *to lay down as a rule to be followed*; **proscribe**, *to forbid by law*.

presently (1) After a short time, e. g. Presently we left the table and sat in the garden-room (Evelyn Waugh). (2) At present, currently, e. g. The praise presently being heaped upon him (The Economist).

° Sense (2) (for long current in American English) is regarded as incorrect by some people but is widely used and often sounds more natural than *at present*.

prestigious (1) Characterized by juggling or magic, delusive, deceptive, e. g. The prestigious balancing act which he was constantly obliged to perform (TLS): now rare. (2) Having or showing prestige, e. g. A career in pure science is still more socially prestigious than one in engineering (The Times): a fully acceptable sense.

prevaricate, *to speak or act evasively or misleadingly*, e. g. I never have told a lie... On many occasions I have resorted to prevarication; but on great occasions I have always told the truth (G. B. Shaw); **procrastinate**, *to postpone action*, e. g. Hamlet... pronounces himself a procrastinator, an undecided man, even a coward (C. S. Lewis).

prevent is followed by the objective case and *from* + the gerund, or by the possessive case + the gerund, e. g. prevent me from going or prevent my going.

° Prevent me going is informal only.

° **pre-war** as an adverb, *in*, e. g., Some time pre-war there was a large contract out for tender (Daily Telegraph): prefer *before the war*.

pristine (1) Ancient, original, e. Stone which faithfully reproduced its pristine alternations of milk and cream (J. I. M. Stewart). (2) Having its original, unspoilt condition, e. g. Pristine snow reflects about 90 per cent of incident sunlight (Fred Hoyle).

° Pristine does not mean "spotless", "pure", or "fresh".

procrastinate: see **prevaricate**.

prone (followed by *to*) is used like, and means much the same as, *liable*, except that it usually qualifies a personal subject, e. g. My literary temperament rendering me especially prone to "all that kind of poisonous nonsense" (Cyril Connolly).

proportion means "a comparative part, share, or ratio"; it is not a mere synonym for *part*.

proscribe: see **prescribe**.

protagonist, the leading character in a story or incident.

° In Greek drama there was only one protagonist, but this is no reason to debar the use of the word in the plural, e. g. We... sometimes mistook a mere supernumerary in a fine dress for one of the protagonists (C. S. Lewis).

° Do not confuse with *proponent*: the word contains the Greek prefix *prot-* "first", not the prefix *pro-* "in favour of", and does not mean "champion, advocate".

protest (verb, transitive) *to affirm solemnly*, e. g. He barely attempted to protest his innocence (George Orwell).

° The sense "protest against", e. g. in The residents have protested the sale, is Amer. only.

proven. It is not standard to use this as the ordinary past participle of *prove* in British English (it is standard Scots and Amer.); it is, however, common attributively in certain expressions, such as of proven ability.

provenance, origin, place of origin, is used in Britain; the form *provenience* is its usual Amer. equivalent.

prudent, showing carefulness and foresight, e. g. It seemed prudent to inform him of my plans rather than let him hear about them indirectly; prudential, involving or marked by prudence, e. g.

The humble little outfit of prudential maxims which really underlay much of the talk about Shakespeare's characters (C. S. Lewis).

pry, to prise (open, etc.): chiefly Amer., but occasionally in British literary use, e. g. For her to pry his fingers open (David Garnett). The normal sense is "peer" or "inquire".

quadrillion see **billion**.

question (1) No question that (sometimes but), no doubt that, e. g. There can be no question that the burning of Joan of Arc must have been a most instructive and interesting experiment (G. B. Shaw); There is no question but Leslie was an unusually handsome boy (Anthony Powell).

(2) No question of, no possibility of, e. g. There can be no question of tabulating successes and failures and trying to decide whether the successes are too numerous to be accounted for by chance (C. S. Lewis). See also **beg the question**, **leading question**.

quote (noun = quotation) is informal only (except in Printing and Commerce).

° **re** (in the matter of, referring to) is better avoided and should not be used for "about, concerning".

reason. The reason (why)..is..should be followed by that, not because, e. g. The reason why such a suggestion sounds hopeless... is that few people are able to imagine the radio being used for the dissemination of anything except tripe (George Orwell).

recoup (1) (transitive) to recompense (oneself or a person) for (a loss or expenditure), e. g. Dixon felt he could recoup himself a little for the expensiveness of the drinks (Kingsley Amis); also to recoup one's losses; (2) (intransitive) to make good one's loss, e. g. I had... acquired so many debts that if I didn't return to England to recoup, we might have to run for it (Chaim Bermant).

° This word is not synonymous with recuperate except partly in sense (2) above ("to make good one's loss").

recuperate (1) (intransitive) to recover from exhaustion, ill-health, financial loss, etc., e. g. I've got a good mind... to put all my winnings on red and give him a chance to recuperate (Graham Greene); (2) (transitive) to recover (health, a loss, material).

In sense (2) recover is preferable.

redolent, smelling of something, e. g. Corley's breath redolent of rotten cornjuice (James Joyce); also used figuratively to mean "strongly suggestive or reminiscent of", e. g. The missive most

redolent of money and sex (Martin Amis).

referendum.

° For the plural, referendums is preferable to referenda.

refute, to prove (a statement, opinion, accusation, etc.), to be false, e. g. The case against most of them must have been so easily refuted that they could hardly rank as suspects (Rebecca West); to prove (a person) to be in error, e. g. One of those German scholars whose function is to be refuted in a footnote (Frederic Raphael).

° Refute does not mean "deny" or "repudiate" (an allegation etc.).

regalia is a plural noun, meaning "emblems of royalty or of an order". It has no singular in ordinary English.

region: in the region of, unwieldy periphrasis for roundabout, is better avoided.

register office is the official term for the institution informally often called the registry office.

regretfully, in a regretful manner; regrettably, it is to be regretted (that).

° Regretfully should not be used where regrettably is intended: The investigators, who must regretfully remain anonymous (TLS), reads as a guess at the investigators' feelings instead of an expression of the writer's opinion, which was what was intended. The influence of hopefully (2) may be discernible here.

renege (intransitive), to fail to fulfil an agreement or undertaking, is usually constructed with on, e. g. It... renege on Britain's commitment to the East African Asians (The Times).

resource is often confused with recourse and resort. Resource means (1) a reserve upon which one can draw (often used in the plural); (2) an action or procedure to which one can turn in difficulty, an expedient; (3) mental capabilities for amusing oneself, etc. (often used in the plural, e. g. Left to his own resources); (4) ability to deal with a crisis, e. g. A man of infinite resource. Recourse means the action of turning to a possible source of help; frequently in the phrases have recourse to, without recourse to. Resort means (1) the action of turning to a possible source of help (= recourse; but resorting is more usual than resort after without); frequently in the phrase in the last resort, as a last expedient, in the end; (2) a thing to which one can turn in difficulty.

responsible for (1) Liable to be called to account for, e. g. I'm not responsible for what uncle Percy does (E. M. Forster).

(2) Obligated to take care of or carry out, e. g. Both they and the singers, who were responsible for their respective duties (NEB).

(3) Being the cause of, e. g. A war-criminal responsible for so many unidentified deaths (Graham Greene).

° Beware of using senses (1) or (2) in expressions in which sense (3) can be understood, with absurd results, e. g. Now, as Secretary for Trade, he is directly responsible for pollution (The Times).

restive (1) Unmanageable, rejecting control, obstinate, e. g. The I. L. P...had been increasingly restive during the second Labour government, and now, refusing to accept Labour-party discipline in the house of commons, voluntarily disaffiliated from the Labour party (A. J. P. Taylor).

(2) Restless, fidgety, e. g. The audiences were not bad, though apt to be restive and noisy at the back (J. B. Priestley).

° Sense (2) is objected to by some authorities but is quite commonly used by good writers.

revenge: one revenges oneself or a wrong (on an offender); one is revenged (for a wrong): the noun is revenge, and the idea is usually of satisfaction of the offended party's resentment. Cf. **avenge**.

reverend, deserving reverence; reverent, showing reverence. (The) Revd, plural Revds, is the abbreviation of Reverend as a clergy title (not Rev.).

reversal is the noun corresponding to the verb reverse; reversion is the noun corresponding to the verb revert.

same. ° It is non-standard to use the phrase same as as a kind of conjunction meaning "in the same way as, just as", e. g. But I shouldn't be able to serve them personally, same as I do now (L. P. Hartley).

° The phrase same like, used for just like or in the same way as, is illiterate, e. g. I have rich friends, same like you (Iris Murdoch).

sanction (verb) to give approval to, to authorize, e. g. This council sanctioned the proclamation of a state of war with Germany from 11 p. m. (A. J. P. Taylor).

° It does not mean "impose sanctions on".

sc. (short for Latin scilicet = scire licet one is permitted to know) introduces (1) a word to be supplied, e. g. He asserted that he had met him (sc. the defendant) on that evening, or (2) a word to be substituted for one already used, in order to render an expression intelligible, e. g. "I wouldn't of (sc. have) done" was her answer.

scabrous (1) (In Botany and Zoology) having a rough surface. (2) Encrusted with dirt, grimy, e. g. The streaky green distempered walls and the scabrous wooden W. C. seat (John Braine). (3) Risque, salacious, indecent, e. g. Silly and scabrous titters about Greek pederasty (C. S. Lewis).

° Scabrous does not mean "scathing, abusive, scurrilous".

scarify, to loosen the surface of (soil, etc.); to make slight cuts in (skin, tissue) surgically.

° The verb scarify (pronounced scare-ify) "scare, terrify", e. g. To be on the brink of a great happiness is a scarifying feeling (Noel Coward), is informal only.

scenario (1) An outline of the plot of a play. (2) A film script giving details of scenes, stage-directions, etc. (3) An outline of an imagined (usually future) sequence of events, e. g.

Several of the computer “scenarios” include a catastrophic and sudden collapse of population (Observer).

° Sense (3) is valid when a detailed narrative of events that might happen under certain conditions is denoted. The word should not be used as a loose synonym for scene, situation, circumstance, etc.

scilicet: see *sc.*

Scottish is now the usual adjective; Scotch is restricted to a fairly large number of fixed expressions, e. g. Scotch broth, egg, whisky; Scots is used mainly for the Scottish dialect of English, in the names of regiments, and in Scotsman, Scotswoman (Scotchman, -woman are old-fashioned). To designate the inhabitants of Scotland, the plural noun Scots is normal.

seasonable, suitable for the time of year, occurring at the right time or season, opportune; unseasonable occurring at the wrong time or season, e. g. You are apt to be pressed to drink a glass of vinegary port at an unseasonable hour (Somerset Maugham).

° Do not confuse with seasonal, occurring at or associated with a particular season, e. g. There is a certain seasonal tendency to think better of the Government... in spring (The Economist)

senior, superior are followed by *to*. They contain the idea of “more” (advanced in years, exalted in position, etc.) and so cannot be constructed with *more... than*, e. g. There are several officers senior, or superior in rank, *to* him, not... more senior, or more superior in rank, than him.

sensibility, ability to feel, sensitiveness, delicacy of feeling, e. g. The man's moving fingers... showed no sign of acute sensibility (Graham Greene).

° Sensibility is not the noun corresponding to sensible meaning “having good sense”; i. e. it does not mean “possession of good sense”.

sensual, gratifying to the body; indulging oneself with physical pleasures, showing that one does this, e. g. His sensual eye took in her slim feminine figure (Angus Wilson); sensuous, affecting or appealing to the senses (without the pejorative implications of sensual), e. g. I got up and ran about the... meadow in my bare feet. I remember the sensuous pleasure of it (C. Day Lewis).

serendipity, the making of pleasant discoveries by accident, or the knack or fact of doing this; the adjective (usually applied to a discovery, event, fact, etc.) is serendipitous.

° Serendipitous does not mean merely “fortunate”.

sic (Latin for thus) is placed in brackets after a word that appears odd or erroneous to show that the word is quoted exactly as it stands in the original, e. g. Daisy Ashford's novel *The Young Visitors* (*sic*).

sick see **ill**.

° **sit, stand**. The use of the past participle *sat, stood* with the verb *to be*, meaning *to be sitting, standing*, is non-standard, e. g. No really, I'd be *sat* there falling asleep if I did come (Kingsley Amis).

situation A useful noun for expressing the sense “position of affairs, combination of circumstances” which may validly be preceded by a defining adjective, e. g. the financial, industrial, military, political, situation.

° The substitution of an attributive noun for an adjective before *situation* should be carefully considered. It should not be used when the resulting phrase will be tautologous (e. g. a crisis situation, people in work situations: crises and work are themselves situations). The placing of an attributive phrase before *situation* is nearly always ugly and should be avoided, e. g. The deep space situation, a balance-of-terror situation, a standing credit situation.

° The combination of *ongoing* with *situation* is a cliché, to be avoided.

sled is Amer. for sledge; sleigh is a sledge for passengers that is drawn by horses (or reindeer).

so used adverbially as a means of linking two clauses and meaning “therefore” may be preceded by *and* but need not be; e. g. Leopold Bloom is a modern Ulysses, *so* he has to

encounter Sirens and a Cyclops (Anthony Burgess); I had received no word from Martha all day, so I was drawn back to the casino (Graham Greene).

so-called (1) has long been used in the sense "called by this term, but not entitled to it"; (2) is now often used quite neutrally, without implication of incorrectness, especially in Science.

sort of see **kind of**.

specialty, except for its use in Law, is an equivalent of speciality restricted to North America.

spectate, to be a spectator, is at best informal.

° Watch is usually an adequate substitute, e. g. in A spectating, as opposed to a reading, audience (Listener).

strata is the plural of stratum.

° It is incorrect to treat it as a singular noun, e. g. in The movement has... sunk to a wider and more anonymous strata.

style. (1) Adjective + -style used to qualify a noun, e. g. European— style clothing, contemporary-style dancing, is acceptable.

(2) Adjective or noun + -style, forming an adverb, is somewhat informal, e. g. A revolution, British-style (A. J. P. Taylor).

substantial, actually existing; real value; of solid material; having much property; in essentials; e. g. substantial damages, progress; a substantial house, yeoman; substantial agreement.

° It is not merely a synonym of large.

substantive (adjective) is used mainly in technical senses; e. g. substantive rank, in the services, is permanent, not acting or temporary.

substitute (verb) to put (someone or something) in place of another: constructed with for; e. g. Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few (G. B. Shaw).

° The sense "replace (someone or something) by or with another" is incorrect, or at best highly informal, e. g. in Having substituted her hat with a steel safety helmet, she went on a tour of the site (better, Having replaced her hat... with or Having substituted a steel safety helmet for...)

such as see **like**.

superior see **senior**

suppositious, hypothetical, conjectural; supposititious, fraudulently substituted (especially of a child displacing a real heir), e. g.

Russia is the supposititious child of necessity in the household of theory (H. G. Wells).

synchronize (transitive), to make to occur at the same time, e. g. Everyday cordialities would be synchronized with gazes of rapt ardour (Martin Amis).

° It is not a synonym for combine or co-ordinate.

than see **different, other than, prefer, senior**.

thankfully see **hopefully**.

the (article). When a name like The Times or The Hague is used attributively, The is dropped, e. g. A Times correspondent, Last year's Hague conference. If the precedes the name in such a construction, it belongs to the succeeding noun, not to the name, and is therefore not given a capital initial (or italics), e. g. A report from the Times correspondent.

the (adverb) prefixed to a comparative means "thereby" or "by so much", e. g. What student is the better for mastering these futile distinctions? This combination can enter into the further construction seen in The more the merrier (i. e. "by how much more, by that much merrier"). It cannot enter into a construction with than: the tendency to insert it before more and less (putting any the more, none the less for anymore, no less) should be resisted, e. g. in The intellectual release had been no less (not none the less) marked than the physical.

then may be used as an adjective preceding a noun as a neat alternative to at that time or similar phrase, e. g. Hearing that they were on personal terms with the then Prime Minister (Frederic Raphael).

° It should not be placed before the noun if it would sound equally well in its usual position, e. g. Harold Macmillan was the then Prime Minister could equally well be was then the Prime Minister. The same applies to an adverbial use of then before attributive adjectives, e. g. The then existing constitution: write The constitution then existing.

there- adverbs, e. g. therein, thereon, thereof, etc., belong mainly to very formal diction and should be avoided in ordinary writing (apart from certain idiomatic adverbs, e. g. thereabouts, thereby, thereupon); e. g. We did not question this reasoning, and there lay our mistake (Evelyn Waugh): a lesser writer might have written therein. But such adverbs can be employed for special effectiveness, e. g. This idea brought him rocketing back to earth. But he stood thereupon like a giant (Iris Murdoch).

through, up to and including, e. g. Friday through Tuesday, though useful, is Amer. only.

too followed by an adjective used attributively should be confined to poetry or special effects in prose, e. g. Metropolis, that too-great city (W. H. Auden); A small too-pretty house (Graham Greene).

° In normal prose it is a clumsy construction, e. g. The crash came during a too-tight loop.

tooth-comb and fine tooth-comb, arising from a misapprehension of fine-tooth comb, are now established expressions whose illogicality it is pedantic to object to.

tortuous, torturous. Do not confuse: tortuous means (1) twisting, e. g. Through tortuous lanes where the overhanging boughs whipped the windscreen (Evelyn Waugh); (2) devious, e. g. Control had his reasons; they were usually so bloody tortuous it took you a week to work them out (John le Carr.). Torturous means "involving torture, excruciating", e. g. Torturously original inlay-work (TLS).

transcendent, surpassing (e. g. Of transcendent importance), (of God) above and distinct from the universe, e. g. Such transcendent power does not come from us, but is God's alone (NEB); transcendental, visionary, idealistic, beyond experience, etc., e. g. Most of those who have been near death have also described some kind of mystical or transcendental experience (British Medical Journal). (Other more technical senses of each word are ignored here.)

transpire (figuratively): (1) To leak out, come to be known, e. g. What had transpired concerning that father was not so reassuring (John Galsworthy). (2) To come about, take place, e. g. What transpired between them is unknown (David Cecil).

° Sense (2), probably arising from the misunderstanding of sentences like "What had transpired during his absence he did not know", is chiefly informal. It is regarded by many people as unacceptable, especially if the idea of something emerging from ignorance is absent: it should therefore not be used in sentences like A storm transpired.

trillion see **billion**.

triumphal, of or celebrating a triumph, e. g. A triumphal arch; triumphant, conquering, exultant.

try (verb) in writing normally followed by the to- infinitive: try and + bare infinitive is informal.

turbid (1) thick, dense; (2) confused, disordered, e. g. In an access of despair had sought death in the turbid Seine (W. Somerset Maugham).

Turgid (1) swollen; (2) (of language) inflated, grandiloquent, e. g. Some of them are turgid, swollen with that kind of intellectual bombast which never rises to gusto (G. H. Vallins).

underlay (verb) (past underlaid) to lay something under (a thing), e. g. Underlaid the tiles with felt: a somewhat rare verb; underlie (past tense underlay, past participle underlain) to lie under; to be the basis of; to exist beneath the surface of, e. g. The arrogance that underlay their cool good manners (Doris Lessing).

unequivocal, not ambiguous, unmistakable; similarly unequivocally adverb, e. g. Made her intentions unequivocally clear.

° The forms unequivocable, -ably, sometimes seen, are erroneous.

unexceptionable, -al see **exceptionable**.

unique (1) Being the only one of its kind, e. g. The fighting quality that gives war its unique power over the imagination (G. B. Shaw): in this sense unique cannot be qualified by adverbs like absolutely, most, quite, so, thoroughly, etc. (2) Unusual, remarkable, singular,

e. g. A passionate human insight so unique in her experience that she felt it to be unique in human experience (Muriel Spark).

° Sense (2) is regarded by many people as incorrect. Substitute one of the synonyms given above, or whatever other adjective is appropriate.

unlike (adverb) may govern a noun, noun phrase, or pronoun, just as like may, e. g. A sarcasm unlike ordinary sarcasm (V. S. Pritchett). It may not govern a clause with or without ellipsis of the verb, e. g. He was unlike he had ever been; Unlike in countries of lesser economic importance.

° **various** cannot be used as a pronoun followed by of (as, for example, several can), as (wrongly) in The two ministers... concerned have been paying private visits to various of the Commonwealth representatives.

venal, able to be bribed, influenced by bribery; venial, pardonable.

vengeance see **avenge**.

verbal (1) of or in words; (2) of a verb; (3) spoken rather than written.

° Some people reject sense (3) as illogical and prefer oral. However, verbal is the usual term in a number of idioms, such as verbal communication, contract, evidence.

verge (verb) in verge on, upon, to border on, e. g. He told two or three stories verging on the improper (John Galsworthy), is in origin a different word from verge in verge to, towards to incline towards, approach, e. g. The London docks, where industrial disputes always verged towards violence (A. J. P. Taylor). Both are acceptable.

vermin is usually treated as plural, e. g. A lot of parasites, vermin who feed on God's love and charity (Joyce Cary).

via (1) By way of (a place), e. g. To London via Reading. (2) By means of, through the agency of, e. g. Other things can... be taught... via the air, via television, via teaching machines, and so on (E. F. Schumacher); I sent it via my secretary.

° Sense (2) is sometimes criticized, but is certainly acceptable in informal use.

waive to refrain from using or insisting on, to forgo or dispense with, e. g. The satisfaction... of waiving the rights which my preaching gives me (NEB).

° Do not confuse this with wave, chiefly in conjunction with aside, away, as (wrongly) in But the Earl simply waived the subject away with his hand (Trollope).

want, need (verbs) in the sense "require" can be followed (1) by a gerund as object, e. g. Your hair needs or wants cutting or (2) by an object and a past participle as complement to the object (with the verb "to be" omitted), e. g. We want or need this changed.

° The idiom We want or need this changing (perhaps a mixture of the two constructions, but having the sense of (2)) is informal only.

well is joined by a hyphen to following participle when the combination is used attributively, e. g. A well-worn argument.

Predicatively a hyphen is not necessary unless the combination is to be distinguished in meaning from the two words written separately, e. g. He is well-spoken but The words were well spoken.

what ever, when ever, where ever: see **ever**.

whence meaning "from where", does not need to be preceded by from.

who ever see **ever**.

whoever, any one who, no matter who: use whoever for the objective case as well as the subjective, rather than whomever, which is rather stilted.

-wise (suffix) added to nouns (1) forming adverbs of manner, is very well established, but is now, except in fixed expressions like clockwise, rather literary or poetic, e. g. The Saint wears tight yellow trousers... and is silkily shaven Romanwise (TLS); (2) forming viewpoint adverbs (meaning "as regards—"), e. g. I can eat only Cox's Orange Pippins, and am in mourning applewise from April to October (Iris Murdoch).

° (2) is widely regarded as unacceptable in formal usage.

° Adverbs of type (2) are formed on nouns only, not on adjectives: hence sentences like The ratepayers would have to shoulder an extra burden financial-wise are incorrect (substitute... burden finance-wise or financial burden).

° **without** = “unless” is illiterate, e. g. Without you have a bit of class already, your town gets no new theatre (Listener). See also **hardly**.

womankind is better than womenkind (cf. **mankind**).

worth while is usually written as two words predicatively, but as one attributively, e. g. He thought it worth while, or a worthwhile undertaking, to publish the method.

write (to compose a letter) with indirect personal object, e. g. I will write you about it, is not acceptable British English (but is good Amer. English).

4.0 Grammar

Language is an instrument for communication. The language which can with the greatest ease make the finest and most numerous distinctions of meaning is the best.
(C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Words*)

THIS section deals with specific problems of grammar; it makes no attempt at a systematic exposition of English syntax.

It is notoriously difficult to find convenient labels for many of the topics on which guidance is needed. Wherever possible, the headings chosen for the entries are, or include, the words which actually cause grammatical problems (e. g. *as*, *may* or *might*). Some headings include the grammatical endings involved (e. g. *-ing*). But inevitably many entries have had to be given abstract labels (e. g. *double passive*, *subjunctive*).

To compensate for this, a number of cross-references are included, by which the user can find a way to the required entry. The aim throughout is to tackle a particular problem immediately and to give a recommendation as soon as the problem has been identified. Explanations entailing wider grammatical principles are postponed or even omitted.

4.1 adverbial relative clauses

A relative clause, expressing time, manner, or place, can follow a noun governed by a preposition (on the day in the example below):

On the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die (NEB)

It is possible for the relative clause to begin with the same preposition and *which*, e. g.

On the day on which this occurred, I was away

But it is a perfectly acceptable idiom to use a relative clause introduced by *that* without repetition of the preposition, especially after the nouns *day*, *morning*, *night*, *time*, *year*, etc., *manner*, *sense*, *way* (see *way*, relative clause following), *place*, e. g.

Envy in the consuming sense that certain persons display the trait (Anthony Powell)

It is, if anything, even more usual for *that* to be omitted:

He cannot have been more than thirty at the time we met him (Evelyn Waugh)

If he would take it in the sense she meant it (L. P. Hartley)

On the day you pass over the Jordan (NEB)

4.2 adverbs without -ly

Most adverbs consist of an adjective + the ending *-ly*, e. g. *badly*, *differently*. For the changes in spelling that the addition of *-ly* may require, see *-ly*.

Normally the use of the ordinary adjective as an adverb, without *-ly*, is non-standard, e. g.

I was sent for special.

The Americans speak different from us.

They just put down their tools sudden and cut and run.

There are, however, a number of words which are both adjective and adverb and cannot add the adverbial ending *-ly*:

early	fast	much
enough	little	straight
far	low	

Some other adjectives can be used as adverbs both with and without *-ly*.

The two forms have different meanings:

deep	high	near
hard	late	

The forms without *-ly* are the adverbs more closely similar in meaning to the adjectives, as the following examples illustrate:

deep: Still waters run deep.

He read deep into the night.

hard: They hit me hard in the chest He lost his hard-earned money.

We will be hard put to it to be ready by Christmas.

high: It soared high above us.

Don't fix your hopes too high.

late: I will stay up late to finish it.

A drawing dated as late as 1960.

near: He won't come near me.

As near as makes no difference Near-famine conditions

The forms with -ly have meanings more remote from those of the adjectives:

deeply is chiefly figurative, e. g. Deeply in love

hardly = "scarcely", e. g. He hardly earned his money

highly is chiefly figurative, e. g. Don't value possessions too highly

lately = "recently", e. g. I have been very tired lately

nearly = "almost", e. g. The conditions were nearly those of a famine

° The forms with and without -ly are not interchangeable and should not be confused.

See also -lily adverbs

4.3 article, omission of

To omit, or not to omit, a (an) and the?

Omission of the definite or indefinite article before a noun or noun phrase in apposition to a name is a journalistic device, e. g.

Clarissa, American business woman, comes to England (Radio Times)

Nansen, hero and humanitarian, moves among them (The Times)

It is more natural to write an American business woman, the hero and humanitarian.

Similarly, when the name is in apposition to the noun or noun phrase, and the article is omitted, the effect is of journalistic style, e. g.

NUM President Arthur Scargill

Best-selling novelist Barbara Cartland

Unemployed labourer William Smith

Preferably write: The NUM President, The best-selling novelist, An unemployed labourer (with a comma before and after the name which follows).

After as it is possible to omit a or the, e. g.

As manipulator of words, the author reminded me of X. Y.

The Soviet system could no longer be regarded as sole model for Communism everywhere

It is preferable not to omit these words, however, except where the noun or noun phrase following is treated as a kind of generic mass noun, e. g.

The vivid relation between himself, as man, and the sunflower, as sunflower (D. H. Lawrence)

4.4 as, case following

In the following sentences, formal usage requires the subjective case (I, he, she, we, they) because the pronoun would be the subject if a verb were supplied:

You are just as intelligent as he (in full, as he is)

Widmerpool... might not have heard the motif so often as I (Anthony Powell) (in full, as I had)

Informal usage permits You are just as intelligent as him.

Formal English uses the objective case (me, him, her, us, them) only when the pronoun would be the object if a verb were supplied:

I thought you preferred John to Mary, but I see that you like her just as much as him (which means... just as much as you like him)

In real usage, sentences like this are rare and not very natural. It is more usual for the verb to be included in the sentence or for the thought to be expressed in a different construction.

4.5 as if, as though

For the tense following these see as if, as though.

4.6 auxiliary verbs

There are sixteen auxiliary verbs in English, three primary auxiliaries (used in the compounding of ordinary verbs) and thirteen modal auxiliaries (used to express mood, and, to some extent, tense).

Primary: be, do, have

Modal: can	ought (to)
could	shall
dare	should
may	used (to)
might	will
must	would
need	

Auxiliaries differ from regular verbs in the following ways:

1. They can precede the negative not, instead of taking the do not construction, e. g. I cannot but I do not know;
2. They can precede the subject in questions, instead of taking the do construction, e. g. Can you hear but Do you know.

The modal auxiliaries additionally differ from regular verbs in the following ways:

3. They are invariable: they do not add -s for the third person present, and do not form a separate past tense in -ed; e. g. He must go; he must have seen it.
4. They are usually followed by the bare infinitive; e. g. He will go, he can go (not "to go" as with other verbs, e. g. He intends to go, he is able to go).

Use of auxiliaries

In reported speech and some other that-clauses can, may, shall, and will become could, might, should, and would for the past tense:

He said that he could do it straight away

I told you that I might arrive unexpectedly

I knew that when I grew up I should be a writer (George Orwell)

Did you think that the money you brought would be enough?

In clauses of this kind, the auxiliaries must, need, and ought, which normally refer to the present tense, can also be used for the past tense:

I had meant to return direct to Paris, but this business... meant that I must go to London (Evelyn Waugh)

To go to church had made her feel she need not reproach herself for impropriety (V. S. Pritchett)

She was quite aware that she ought not to quarter Freddy there (G. B. Shaw)

Note that this use is restricted to that-clauses. It would not be permissible to use must, need, or ought for the past tense in a main sentence; for example, one could not say: Yesterday I must go.

Further discussion of the use of auxiliary verbs will be found under

"can and may" in topic 4.8,

"dare" in topic 4.15,

"have" in topic 4.21,

"need" in topic 4.33,

"ought" in topic 4.37,

"shall and will" in topic 4.43,

"should and would" in topic 4.44,

"used to" in topic 4.56,

"were or was" in topic 4.58.

4.7 but, case following

The personal pronoun following but (= "except") should be in the case it would have if a verb were supplied.

I walked through the mud of the main street. Who but I? (Kipling)

Our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defence but us (C. S. Lewis)
In the Kipling example I is used because it would be the subject of I walked. In the Lewis example us is used because it would be the object of who have (i. e. "who have us as their only defence").

4.8 can and may

The auxiliary verbs can and may are both used to express permission, but may is more formal and polite:

I'm going to come and see you some time—may I? (Evelyn Waugh)

4.9 collective nouns

Collective nouns are singular words that denote many individuals, e. g.

army
audience
board (of directors)
choir
clan
class
club
committee
company
congregation
crowd
family
fleet
flock
gang
government
group
herd
jury
majority
militia
navy
orchestra
parliament
party (body of persons)
squad
swarm
team
tribe
union (i. e. trade union)

the aristocracy	the laity
the bourgeoisie	the nobility
the Cabinet	the proletariat
the clergy	the public
the elit,	the upper class
the gentry	the working class
the intelligentsia	

It is normal for collective nouns, being singular, to be followed by singular verbs and pronouns (is, has, consists, and it in the examples below):

The Government is determined to beat inflation, as it has promised.

Their family is huge: it consists of five boys and three girls.

The bourgeoisie is despised for not being proletarian. (C. S. Lewis)

The singular verb and pronouns are preferable unless the collective is clearly and unmistakably used to refer to separate individuals rather than to a united body, e. g.

The Cabinet has made its decision, but.

The Cabinet are resuming their places around the table at Number 10 Downing Street.

The Brigade of Guards is on parade, but.

The Brigade of Guards are above average height.

The singular should always be used if the collective noun is qualified by a singular word like this, that, every, etc.:

This family is divided.

Every team has its chance to win.

If a relative clause follows, it must be which + singular verb or who + plural verb, e. g.

It was not the intelligentsia, but just intellectual society, which was gathered there.
(John Galsworthy)

The working party who had been preparing the decorations. (Evelyn Waugh)

° Do not mix singular and plural, as (wrongly) in

The congregation were now dispersing.

It tended to form knots and groups

4.10 comparison of adjectives and adverbs

Whether to use -er, -est or more, most.

The two ways of forming the comparative and superlative of adjectives and adverbs are:

a. The addition of the comparative and superlative suffixes -er and —est (for spelling changes that may be required see p. 18).

Monosyllabic adjectives and adverbs almost always require these suffixes, e. g.

big (bigger, biggest),

soon (sooner, soonest),

and so normally do many adjectives of two syllables, e. g.

narrow (narrower, narrowest),

silly (sillier, silliest).

b. The placing of the comparative and superlative adverbs more and most before the adjective or adverb. These are used with adjectives of three syllables or more (e. g. difficult, memorable), participles (e. g. bored, boring), many adjectives of two syllables (e. g. afraid, awful, childish, harmless, static), and adverbs ending in -ly (e. g. highly, slowly).

Adjectives with two syllables vary between the use of the suffixes and of the adverbs.

There are many which never take the suffixes, e. g.

antique

breathless

futile

bizarre

constant

steadfast

There is also a large class which are acceptable with either, e. g.

clever

handsome

polite

common

honest

solemn

cruel

pleasant

tranquil

extreme

The choice is largely a matter of style. Some examples will show how much variation there is in literary English.

With the suffixes:

An attitude of completest indifference (George Orwell)

The extremest forms of anti-Semitism (Lewis Namier)

You are so much honester than I am (Iris Murdoch)

Now the stupidest of us knows (C. S. Lewis)

With the adverbs:

I was a bit more clever than the other lads (Angus Wilson)

The most solemn of Jane Austen's beaux (Iris Murdoch)

Those periods which we think most tranquil (C. S. Lewis)

With a mixture in one sentence:

Only the dirtiest and most tipsy of cooks (Evelyn Waugh)

Even monosyllabic adjectives can sometimes take more and most:

(i) When two adjectives are compared with each other, e. g.

More dead than alive
More good than bad
More well-known than popular

This is standard (we would not say “better than bad” or “better-known than popular”).

(ii) Occasionally, for stylistic reasons, e. g.

I am the more bad because I realize where my badness lies (L. P. Hartley)
This was never more true than at present

(iii) Thoughtlessly, e. g.

Facts that should be more well known
The most well-dressed man in town
Wimbledon will be yet more hot tomorrow

° These are not acceptable: substitute better known, best dressed, and hotter.

4.11 comparisons

Comparisons between two persons or things require the comparative (-er or more) in constructions like the following:

I cannot tell which of the two is the elder (not eldest)
Of the two teams, they are the slower-moving (not slowest-moving)

The superlative is of course used when more than two are compared.

4.12 compound subject

A subject consisting of two singular nouns or noun phrases joined by and normally takes a plural verb:

My son and daughter are twins
Where to go and what to see were my main concern

If one half of the subject is the pronoun I or the pronoun you, and the other is a noun or third person singular pronoun (he, she, or it), or if the subject is you and I the verb must be plural.

He and I are good friends
Do my sister and I look alike?
You and your mother have similar talents
You and I are hardly acquainted

But if the phrase containing and represents a single item, it is followed by a singular verb:

The bread and butter was scattered on the floor (W. Somerset Maugham)

And similarly if the two parts of the subject refer to a single individual:

His friend and legal adviser, John Smith, was present
My son and heir is safe!

See also “neither... nor” in topic 4.34 and “subjects joined by (either...) or” in topic 4.48

4.13 co-ordination

The linking of two main clauses by a comma alone, without any connecting conjunction, is sometimes said to be incorrect. It is on occasion used by good writers, however, as the examples show. It should be regarded as acceptable if used sparingly.

The peasants possess no harrows, they merely plough the soil several times over (George Orwell)

Charles carried a mackintosh over his arm, he was stooping a little (C. P. Snow)

I began to wonder when the Presidential Candidate would appear, he must have had a heavy handicap (Graham Greene)

4.14 correlative conjunctions

The correct placing of the pairs

both... and	neither... nor
either... or	not only... but (also)

A sentence containing any of these pairs must be so constructed that the part of the sentence introduced by the first member of the pair (both, either, neither, or not only) is parallel in structure to the part introduced by the second member (and, or, neither, or but (also)).

The rule is that if one covers up the two correlative words and all the words between them, the remaining sentence should still be grammatical.

The following sentence from a typical newspaper advertisement illustrates this rule:

Candidates will have a background in either commercial electronics or university research

Because in precedes either, it need not be repeated after or. If it had followed either, it would have had to be inserted after or as well. But the sentence as given is the most economical structure possible.

In the following example the preposition of comes after either and must therefore be repeated after or:

He did not wish to pay the price either of peace or of war (George Orwell)

This conforms with the rule stated above, while perhaps sounding better than of either peace or war (which would be as good grammatically).

It is, however, not uncommon for the conjunctions to be placed so that the two halves are not quite parallel, even in the writings of careful authors, e. g.

I end neither with a death nor a marriage (W. Somerset Maugham)

People who either hadn't been asked to pay or who were simply not troubling themselves (V. S. Pritchett)

In the first example, with belongs to both halves and needs to be repeated after nor. In the second, who precedes either and strictly need not be repeated after or.

These sentences exhibit fairly trivial slips that rarely cause difficulty (except in the case of not only: see only in topic 3.0).

° A more serious error is the placing of the first correlative conjunction too late, so that words belonging only to the first half are carried over to the second, resulting in a grammatical muddle, e. g.

The other Exocet was either destroyed or blew up (BBC News)

This should be carefully avoided.

4.15 dare

The verb to dare can be used either like a regular verb or like an auxiliary verb. Either use is entirely acceptable (though in a particular context, one may sound better than the other).

As an ordinary verb it forms such parts as:

I dare	I do not dare	do I dare?
he dares	he does not dare	does he dare?
he dared	he did not dare	did he dare?
I would dare	I have dared	

As an auxiliary verb it forms:

I dare not	he dared not
he dare not	dared he?
dare he?	

The first use, as an ordinary verb, is always acceptably followed by the to-infinitive, e. g.

I knew what I would find if I dared to look (Jean Rhys)

James did not dare to carry out the sentence (Frederic Raphael)

But many of the forms can also be followed by the bare infinitive. This sometimes sounds more natural:

None of which they'd dare go near (John Osborne)

Don't you dare put that light on (Shelagh Delaney)

The second use, as an auxiliary verb, normally requires the bare infinitive, e. g.

How dare he keep secrets from me? (G. B. Shaw)

He dared not risk being carried past his destination. (C. S. Forester)

4.16 double passive

The construction whereby a passive infinitive directly follows a passive verb is correctly used in the following:

The prisoners were ordered to be shot.

This music is intended to be played on a piano.

The rule is that if the subject and the first passive verb can be changed into the active, leaving the passive infinitive intact, the sentence is correctly formed. The examples above (if a subject, say he, is supplied) can be changed back to:

He ordered the prisoners to be shot.

He intends this music to be played on a piano.

In other words, the passive infinitive is not part of the passive construction. An active infinitive could equally well be part of the sentence, e. g.

The prisoners were ordered to march.

The examples below violate the rule because both the passive verb and the passive infinitive have to be made active in order to form a grammatical sentence:

The order was attempted to be carried out.

(active: He attempted to carry out the order)

A new definition was sought to be inserted in the Bill.

(active: He sought to insert a new definition in the Bill)

This "double passive" construction is unacceptable.

The passive of the verbs to fear and to say can be followed by either an active or a passive infinitive, e. g.

(i) The passengers are feared to have drowned.

The escaped prisoner is said to be very dangerous.

or

(ii) The passengers are feared to have been killed.

The escaped prisoner is said to have been sighted.

The construction at (ii) is not the double passive and is entirely acceptable. Both constructions are sometimes found with other verbs of saying (e. g. to allege, to assert, to imply):

Morris demonstrated that Mr Elton was obviously implied to be impotent. (David Lodge)

4.17 either... or:

see "subjects joined by (either...) or" in topic 4.48.

4.18 either (pronoun)

Either is a singular pronoun and should be followed by a singular verb:

Enormous evils, either of which depends on somebody else's voice. (Louis MacNeice)

In the following example the plural verb accords with the notional meaning "both parents were not".

It was improbable that either of our parents were giving thought to the matter. (J. I. M. Stewart)

This is quite common in informal usage, but should not be carried over into formal prose.

4.19 gender of indefinite expressions

It is often uncertain what personal pronoun should be used to refer back to the indefinite pronouns and adjectives in the following list:

any	everybody
anybody	everyone
anyone	no (+ noun)
each	nobody
every (+ noun)	none
no one	somebody
some (+ noun)	someone

and also to refer back to (a) person, used indefinitely, or a male and female noun linked by (either...) or or neither... nor, e. g.

Has anybody eaten his/their lunch yet?

A person who is upset may vent his/their feelings on his/their family.

Neither John nor Mary has a home of their/his or her own.

If it is known that the individuals referred to are all of the same sex, there is no difficulty; use he or she as appropriate:

Everyone in the women's movement has had her own experience of sexual discrimination.

If, however, the sex of those referred to is unknown or deliberately left indefinite, or if the reference is to a mixed group, the difficulty arises that English has no singular pronoun to denote common gender.

The grammarians' recommendation, during the past two centuries, has been that he (him, himself, his) should be used. Many good writers follow this:

Everyone talked at the top of his voice. (W. Somerset Maugham)

Everyone took his place in a half-circle about the fire. (Malcolm Bradbury)

(The context of each shows that the company was mixed.)

The long street in which nobody knows his neighbour. (G. B. Shaw)

Each person should give as he has decided for himself. (NEB)

Popular usage, however, has for at least five centuries favoured the plural pronoun they (them, themselves, their).

This is entirely acceptable in informal speech:

Nobody would ever marry if they thought it over. (G. B. Shaw)

It's the sort of thing any of us would dislike, wouldn't they? (C. P. Snow)

It is by no means uncommon in more formal contexts:

Nobody stopped to stare, everyone had themselves to think about. (Susan Hill)

His own family were occupied, each with their particular guests. (Evelyn Waugh)

Delavacquerie allowed everyone to examine the proofs as long as they wished. (Anthony Powell)

(The context of the second and third example shows that the company was mixed.)

Many people regard it as inequitable that the masculine pronoun he should be used to include both sexes, and therefore prefer to use they.

One can avoid the difficulty from time to time by writing he or she, as many writers do on awkward occasions:

Nobody has room in his or her life for more than one such relationship at a time. (G. B. Shaw)

But this grows unwieldy with repetition:

If I ever wished to disconcert anyone, all I had to do was to ask him (or her) how many friends he/she had. (Frederic Raphael)

There are some contexts in which neither he nor they will seem objectionable. In others, where he and they both seem inappropriate for the reasons given, it may be necessary simply to recast the sentence.

4.20 group possessive

The group possessive is the construction by which the ending -'s of the possessive case can be added to the last word of a noun phrase, which is regarded as a single unit, e. g.

The king of Spain's daughter

John and Mary's baby

Somebody else's umbrella

A quarter of an hour's drive

Expressions like these are natural and acceptable.

Informal language, however, permits the extension of the construction to long and complicated phrases:

The people in the house opposite's geraniums.

The woman I told you about on the phone yesterday's name is Thompson.

The man who called last week's umbrella is still in the hall.

In these, the connection between the words forming the group possessive is much looser and more complicated than in the earlier examples. The effect is often somewhat ludicrous.

° Expressions of this sort should not be used in serious prose.

Substitute:

The geraniums of the people in the house opposite

The name of the woman I told you about on the phone yesterday is Thompson

The umbrella of the man who called last week is still in the hall

4.21 have

1. The verb to have, in some of its uses, can form its interrogative and negative either with or without the verb to do, e. g. Do you have/have you?, You don't have/you haven't.

In sentences like those below, have is a verb of event, meaning "experience". The interrogative (in the first example) and the negative (in the second example) are always formed in the regular way, using the verb do:

Do you ever have nightmares?

We did not have an easy time getting here.

In the next pair of sentences, have is a verb of state, meaning "possess". When used in this sense, the interrogative (in the first example) and negative (in the second example) can be formed in the manner of an auxiliary verb, without the verb do:

What have you in common with the child of five whose photograph your mother keeps?
(George Orwell)

The truth was that he hadn't the answer. (Joyce Cary)

In more informal language, the verb got is added, e. g. What have you got, He hadn't got the answer. This is not usually suitable for formal usage.

It was formerly usual to distinguish the sense "experience" from the sense "possess" by using the do-formation for the first and the auxiliary formation for the second (but only in the present tense).

Hence I don't have indigestion (as a rule) was kept distinct from I haven't (got) indigestion (at the moment). The use of the do-construction when the meaning was "possess" was an Americanism, but it is now generally acceptable.

° However, the use of do as a substitute verb for have, common informally, is not acceptable in formal prose:

I had stronger feelings than she did (substitute than she had)

Some have money, some don't (substitute some haven't)

2. Have is often wrongly inserted after I'd in sentences like:

If I'd have known she'd be here I don't suppose I'd have come (Character in play by John Osborne)

This is common, and hardly noticed, in speech, but should not occur in formal writing. The correct construction is:

If I'd known she'd be here...

Without the contraction, the clause would read: If I had known, with the past perfect, which is the correct form in this kind of if-clause.

The only expression that the mistaken If I'd have known could stand for is If I would have known, which is impossible in this context.

4.22 he who, she who

He who and she who are correctly used when he and she are the subject of the main clause, and who is the subject of the relative clause:

He who hesitates is lost.

She who was a star in the old play may find herself a super in the new. (C. S. Lewis)

In these examples he and she are the subjects of is lost and may find respectively; who is the subject of hesitates and was.

He who and she who should not be treated as invariable. They should change to him who and her who if the personal pronouns are not the subject of the main clause:

The distinction between the man who gives with conviction and him (not he) who is simply buying a title.

Similarly who must become whom if it is not the subject of the relative clause:

I sought him whom my soul loveth (Authorized Version)

See also who and whom (interrogative and relative pronouns).

4.23 -ics, nouns in

Nouns ending in -ics denoting subjects or disciplines are sometimes treated as singular and sometimes as plural. Examples are:

apologetics	genetics	optics
classics (as a study)	linguistics	phonetics
dynamics	mathematics	physics
economics	mechanics	politics
electronics	metaphysics	statistics
ethics	obstetrics	tactics

When used strictly as the name of a discipline they are treated as singular:

Psychometrics is unable to investigate the nature of intelligence (Guardian)

The quest for a hermeneutics (TLS)

So also when the complement is singular:

Mathematics is his strong point

When used more loosely, to denote a manifestation of qualities, often accompanied by a possessive, they are treated as plural:

His politics were a mixture of fear, greed and envy (Joyce Cary)

I don't understand the mathematics of it, which are complicated

The acoustics in this hall are dreadful

Their tactics were cowardly

So also when they denote a set of activities or pattern of behaviour, as commonly with words like

acrobatics	dramatics	heroics
athletics	gymnastics	hysterics
callisthenics		

E. g. The mental gymnastics required to believe this are beyond me

These words usually retain a plural verb even with a singular complement:

The acrobatics are just the social side (Tom Stoppard)

4.24 infinitive, present or perfect

The perfect infinitive is correctly used when it refers to a state or action earlier in time than that referred to by the verb on which it depends, e. g.

If it were real life and not a play, that is the part it would be best to have acted (C. S. Lewis)

Someone seems to have been making a beast of himself here (Evelyn Waugh)

In the above examples, the infinitives to have acted and to have been making relate to actions earlier in time than the verbs would be best and seems.

Only if the first verb relates to the past and the infinitive relates to a state or action prior to that should a perfect infinitive follow a past or perfect verb, forming a sort of "double past", e. g.

When discussing sales with him yesterday, I should have liked to have seen the figures beforehand

In this example I should have liked denotes the speaker's feelings during the discussion and to have seen denotes an action imagined as occurring before the discussion.

If the state or action denoted by the infinitive is thought of as occurring at the same time as the verb on which it depends, then the present infinitive should be used:

She would have liked to see what was on the television (Kingsley Amis)

The "double past" is often accidentally used in this kind of sentence informally, e. g.

I should have liked to have gone to the party

A literary example is:

Mr. McGregor threw down the sack on the stone floor in a way that would have been extremely painful to the Flopsy Bunnies, if they had happened to have been inside it (Beatrix Potter)

This should be avoided.

4.25 -ing (gerund and participle)

1. The -ing form of a verb can in some contexts be used in either of two constructions:

a. as a gerund (verbal noun) with a noun or pronoun in the possessive standing before it, e. g.

In the event of Randall's not going (Iris Murdoch)

She did not like his being High Church (L. P. Hartley)

b. as a participle with a noun in its ordinary form or a pronoun in the objective case standing before it, e. g.

What further need would there have been to speak of another priest arising? (NEB)

Dixon did not like him doing that (Kingsley Amis)

The option of using either arises only when the word before the -ing form is a proper or personal noun (e. g. John, father, teacher) or a personal pronoun.

It is sometimes said that the construction with the possessive (as in (a) above) is obligatory. This rule, in its strict form, should be disregarded. Instead one should, in formal usage, try to employ the possessive construction wherever it is possible and natural:

To whom, without its being ordered, the waiter immediately brought a plate of eggs and bacon (Evelyn Waugh)

The danger of Joyce's turning them into epigrams (Anthony Burgess)

But it is certainly not wrong to use the non-possessive construction if it sounds more natural, as in the New English Bible quotation above.

Moreover, there is sometimes a nuance of meaning. She did not like his being High Church suggests that she did not like the fact that he was High Church, and need not imply personal antipathy, whereas Dixon did not like him doing that suggests an element of repugnance to the person as well as to his action.

When using most non-personal nouns (e. g. luggage, meaning, permission), groups of nouns (e. g. father and mother, surface area), non-personal pronouns (e. g. anything, something), and groups of pronouns (e. g. some of them), there is no choice of construction: the possessive would not sound idiomatic at all.

Examples are:

Travellers in Italy could depend on their luggage not being stolen (G. B. Shaw)

Altogether removing possibility of its meaning being driven home (Anthony Powell)

His lines were cited... without his permission having been asked (The Times)

Due to her father and mother being married (Compton Mackenzie)

Owing to its surface area being so large relative to its weight (George Orwell)

The air of something unusual having happened (Arthur Conan Doyle)

He had no objection to some of them listening (Arnold Bennett)

When the word preceding the -ing form is a regular plural noun ending in -s, there is no spoken distinction between the possessive and the non-possessive form. It is unnecessary to write an apostrophe:

If she knew about her daughters attending the party (Anthony Powell)

2. There is also variation between the gerundial and the participial uses of the -ing form after nouns like difficulty, point, trouble, and use.

Formal English requires the gerundial use, the gerund being introduced by in (or of after use):

There was... no difficulty in finding parking space (David Lodge)

There doesn't seem much point in trying to explain everything (John Osborne)

Informal usage permits the placing of the -ing form immediately after the noun, forming a participial construction, e. g.

He had some trouble convincing Theo Craven (Lynne Reid Banks)

The chairman had difficulty concealing his irritation

° This is not acceptable in formal usage.

4.26 I or me, we or us, etc.

There is often confusion about which case of a personal pronoun to use when the pronoun stands alone or follows the verb to be.

1. When the personal pronoun stands alone, as when it forms the answer to a question, formal usage requires it to have the case it would have if the verb were supplied:

Who killed Cock Robin? —I (in full, I killed him)

Which of you did he approach? —Me (in full, he approached me)

Informal usage permits the objective case in both kinds of sentence, but this is not acceptable in formal style. It so happens that the subjective case often sounds stilted. It is then best to avoid the problem by providing the substitute verb do, or, if the preceding sentence contains an auxiliary, by repeating the auxiliary, e. g.

Who likes cooking? —I do

Who can cook? —I can

2. When a personal pronoun follows it is, it was, it may be, it could have been, etc., it should always have the subjective case:

Nobody could suspect that it was she (Agatha Christie)

We are given no clue as to what it must have felt like to be he (C. S. Lewis)

Informal usage favours the objective case:

I thought it might have been him at the door Don't tell me it's them again!

° This is not acceptable in formal usage.

When who or whom follows, the subjective case is obligatory in formal usage and quite usual informally:

It was I who painted the back door purple

It's they whom I shall be staying with in London

The informal use of the objective case often sounds substandard:

It was her who would get the blood off (Character in work by Patrick White)

(For agreement between the personal pronoun antecedent and the verb in It is I who etc., see I who, you who, etc.)

In constructions which have the form I am + noun or noun phrase + who, the verb following who agrees with the noun (the antecedent of who) and is therefore always in the third person (singular or plural):

I am the sort of person who likes peace and quiet

You are the fourth of my colleagues who's told me that (Character in work by Angus Wilson) ('s = has, agreeing with the fourth)

The following is not standard, but must be explained by the uniqueness of the person denoted by the subject:

How then canst thou be a god that hidest thyself? (NEB)

4.27 I should or I would

There is often uncertainty whether to use should or would in the first person singular and plural before verbs such as like or think and before the adverbs rather and sooner.

1. Should is correct before verbs of liking, e. g. be glad, be inclined, care, like, and prefer:

Would you like a beer? —I should prefer a cup of coffee, if you don't mind

The very occasions on which we should most like to write a slashing review (C. S. Lewis)

2. Should is correct in tentative statements of opinion, with verbs such as guess, imagine, say, and think:

I should imagine that you are right

I should say so I shouldn't have thought it was difficult

3. Would is correct before the adverbs rather and sooner, e. g.

I would truly rather be in the middle of this than sitting in that church in a tight collar
(Susan Hill)

Would is always correct with persons other than the first person singular and plural.
See also should and would

4.28 I who, you who, etc.

The verb following a personal pronoun (I, you, he, etc.) + who should agree with the pronoun and should not be in the third person singular unless the third person singular pronoun precedes who:

I, who have no savings to speak of, had to pay for the work

This remains so even if the personal pronoun is in the objective case:

They made me, who have no savings at all, pay for the work (not who has)

When it is (it was, etc.) precedes I who, etc., the same rule applies: the verb agrees with the personal pronoun:

It's I who have done it It could have been we who were mistaken

Informal usage sometimes permits the third person to be used (especially when the verb to be follows who):

You who's supposed to be so practical!

Is it me who's supposed to be keeping an eye on you?

(Character in work by David Lodge)

° This is not acceptable in formal usage.

4.29 like

The objective case of personal pronouns is always used after the adjectives like and unlike:

Unlike my mother and me, my sister is fair-haired (not Unlike my mother and I)

4.30 -lily adverbs

When the adverbial suffix -ly is added to an adjective which already ends in -ly, the resulting adverb tends to have an unpleasant jingling sound, e. g. *friendlily*.

Adverbs of this kind are divided into three groups, here arranged in order of decreasing acceptability:

1. Those formed from adjectives in which the final -ly is an integral part of the word, not a suffix, e. g. *holily*, *jollily*, *sillily*. These are the least objectionable and are quite often used.

2. Those of three syllables formed from adjectives in which the final -ly is itself a suffix, e. g. *friendlily*, *ghastlily*, *statelily*, *uglily*.

These are occasionally found.

3. Those of four (or more) syllables formed from adjectives in which the final -ly is itself a suffix, e. g. *heavenlily*, *scholarlily*. Such words have been recorded but are deservedly rare.

The adverbs of groups 2 and 3 should be avoided if possible, by using the adjective with a noun like *manner* or *way*, e. g. *In a scholarly manner*.

A few adjectives in -ly can be used adverbially to qualify other adjectives, e. g. *beastly cold*, *ghastly pale*. Occasionally, to avoid the use of an adverb in -lily, the plain adjective has been used to qualify a verb, e. g.

Then I strolled leisurely along those dear, dingy streets (W. Somerset Maugham)

This does not usually sound natural. It is recommended that in a *leisurely* (etc.) way should be used instead.

4.31 may or might

There is sometimes confusion about whether to use *may* or *might* with the perfect infinitive referring to a past event, e. g. *He may have done* or *He might have done*.

1. If uncertainty about the action or state denoted by the perfect infinitive remains, i. e. at the time of speaking or writing the truth of the event is still unknown, then either *may* or *might* is acceptable:

As they all wore so many different clothes of identically the same kind... there may have been several more or several less (Evelyn Waugh)

For all we knew we were both bastards, although of course there might have been a ceremony (Graham Greene)

2. If there is no longer uncertainty about the event, or the matter was never put to the test, and therefore the event did not in fact occur, use might:

If that had come ten days ago my whole life might have been different (Evelyn Waugh)
You should not have let him come home alone, he might have got lost

° It is a common error to use may instead of might in these circumstances:

If he (President Galtieri) had not invaded, then eventually the islands may have fallen into their lap

I am grateful for his intervention without which they may have remained in the refugee camp indefinitely

Schoenberg may never have gone atonal but for the break-up of his marriage

(These are all from recent newspaper articles. Might should be substituted for may in each.)

4.32 measurement, nouns of

There is some uncertainty about when to use the singular form, and when the plural, of nouns of measurement.

1. All nouns of measurement remain in the singular form when compounded with a numeral and used attributively before another noun:

A six-foot wall A five-pound note

A three-mile walk A 1,000-megaton bomb

This rule includes metric measurements:

A ten-hectare field A three-litre bottle

2. Foot remains in the singular form in expressions such as:

I am six foot She is five foot two

But feet is used where an adjective, or the word inches, follows, e. g.

I am six feet tall She is five feet three inches

It is ten feet long

Stone and hundredweight remain in the singular form in plural expressions, e. g.

I weigh eleven stone Three hundredweight of coal

Metric measurements always take the plural form when not used attributively:

This measures three metres by two metres

Two kilos of sugar

Informally, some other nouns of measurement are used in the singular form in plural expressions, e. g.

That will be two pound fifty, please

° This is non-standard.

See also quantity, nouns of

4.33 need

The verb to need, when followed by an infinitive, can be used either like an ordinary verb or like an auxiliary.

1. Need is used like an ordinary verb, and followed by the to— infinitive, in the present tense when the sentence is neither negative nor interrogative, in the past tense always, and in all compound tenses (e. g. the future and perfect):

One needs friends, one needs to be a friend (Susan Hill)

One did not need to be a clairvoyant to see that war... was coming (George Orwell)

2. Need can be used like an auxiliary verb in the present tense in negative and interrogative sentences. This means that:

a. The third person singular need not add -s:

I do not think one need look farther than this (George Orwell)

b. For the negative, need not can replace does not need:

One need not be an advocate of censorship to recommend the cautious use of poison (Frederic Raphael)

c. For the interrogative, need I (you, etc.) can replace do I need:

Need I add that she is my bitterest enemy? (G. B. Shaw)

d. The bare infinitive can follow instead of the to-infinitive:

Company that keeps them smaller than they need be (Bookseller)

(This is negative in sense, for it implies They need not be as small as this)

This auxiliary verb use is optional, not obligatory. The regular constructions are equally correct:

I do not think one needs to look...

One does not need to be...

Do I need to add...

Smaller than they need to be...

One should choose whichever sounds more natural. It is important, however, to avoid mixing the two kinds of construction, as in the two following examples:

One needs not be told that (etc.)

What proved vexing, it needs be said was (etc.)

4.34 neither... nor

Two singular subjects linked by neither... nor can be constructed with either a singular or a plural verb. Strictly and logically a singular verb is required (since both subjects are not thought of as governing the verb at the same time). When the two subjects are straightforward third person pronouns or nouns, it is best to follow this rule:

Neither he nor his wife has arrived

There is neither a book nor a picture in the house

Informal usage permits the plural and it has been common in the writings of good authors for a long time:

Neither painting nor fighting feed men (Ruskin)

When one of the two subjects is plural and the other singular, the verb should be made plural and the plural subject placed nearer to it:

Neither the teacher nor the pupils understand the problem

When one of the subjects is I or you and the other is a third person pronoun or a noun, or when one is I and the other you, the verb can be made to agree with the subject that is nearer to it. However, this does not always sound natural, e. g.

Neither my son nor I am good at figures

One can recast the sentence, but this can spoil the effect intended by using neither... nor. It is often better to use the plural, as good writers do:

Neither Isabel nor I are timid people (H. G. Wells)

Neither Emily nor I were quite prepared for the title (Anthony Powell)

This is not illogical if neither... nor is regarded as the negative of both... and.

4.35 neither (pronoun)

Neither is a singular pronoun and strictly requires a singular verb:

Neither of us likes to be told what to do

Informal usage permits not only a plural verb, but also a plural complement:

Neither of us like tennis Neither of us are good players

Although this is widely regarded as incorrect, it has been an established construction for three or four centuries:

Thersites' body is as good as Ajax', When neither are alive (Shakespeare)

Neither were great inventors (Dryden)

It is recommended that one should follow the rule requiring the singular unless it leads to awkwardness, as when neither he nor she is appropriate:

John and Mary will have to walk. Neither of them have brought their cars

4.36 none (pronoun)

The pronoun none can be followed either by singular verb and singular pronouns, or by plural ones. Either is acceptable, although the plural tends to be more common.

Singular: None of them was allowed to forget for a moment (Anthony Powell)
Plural: None of the fountains ever play (Evelyn Waugh)
 None of the authors expected their books to become best-sellers (Cyril
Connolly)

4.37 ought

Oughtn't or didn't ought?

The standard form of the negative of ought is ought not or oughtn't:

A look from Claudia showed me I ought not to have begun it (V. S. Pritchett)

Being an auxiliary verb, ought can precede not and does not require the verb do. It is non-standard to form the negative with do (didn't ought):

I hope that none here will say I did anything I didn't ought.

For I only done my duty (Character in work by Michael Innes)

When the negative is used to reinforce a question in a short extra clause or "question tag", the negative should be formed according to the rule above:

You ought to be pleased, oughtn't you? (not didn't you?)

In the same way do should not be used as a substitute verb for ought, e. g.

Ought he to go? —Yes, he ought (not he did)

You ought not to be pleased, ought you? (not did you?)

4.38 participles

A participle used in place of a verb in a subordinate clause must have an explicit subject to qualify. If no subject precedes the participle within the clause, the participle is understood to qualify the subject of the main sentence. In the following sentences the participles running and propped qualify the subjects she and we:

Running to catch a bus, she just missed it (Anthony Powell)

We both lay there, propped on our elbows (Lynne Reid Banks)

It is a frequent error to begin a sentence with a participial clause, with no subject expressed, and to continue it with a main clause in which the subject is not the word which the participle qualifies:

Driving along the road, the church appeared on our left

(We, not the church, is the subject of driving)

Having been relieved of his portfolio in 1976, the scheme was left to his successor at the Ministry to complete

(He, or a proper name, is the subject of having been relieved)

In sentences like these one must either recast the main clause so that its subject is the same as that of the subordinate clause, or recast the subordinate clause using a finite verb:

Driving along the road, we saw the church appear on our left

As we were driving along the road the church appeared on our left

Sometimes a subject can be supplied in the participial clause, the clause remaining otherwise unchanged. This is usually only possible when the participle is being or having:

Jones having been relieved of his portfolio in 1976, the scheme was left to his successor at the Ministry to complete

If the subject supplied in accordance with this rule is a personal pronoun it should be in the subjective case:

He being such a liar, no one will believe him when he tells the truth

He rose bearing her, she still weeping, and the others formed a procession behind (Iris Murdoch)

When the participial clause includes a subject it should not be separated by a comma from the participle:

Bernadette being her niece, she feels responsible for the girl's moral welfare (David Lodge) (Not: Bernadette, being her niece, she...)

This in contrast with the punctuation of the other kind of participial clause, in which the participle qualifies the subject of the main sentence. If this type of participial clause follows the subject, it is either marked off by a pair of commas or not marked off at all:

The man, hoping to escape, jumped on to a bus

A man carrying a parcel jumped on to the bus

The rule that a participle must have an explicit subject does not apply to participial clauses whose subject is indefinite (= "one" or "people"). In these the clause is used adverbially, standing apart from and commenting on the content of the sentence:

Judging from his appearance, he has had a night out

Taking everything into consideration, you were lucky to escape

Roughly speaking, this is how it went

The participial clauses here are equivalent to "If one judges..." "If one takes..." "If one speaks..." Expressions of this kind are entirely acceptable.

4.39 preposition at end

It is a natural feature of the English language that many sentences and clauses end with a preposition, and has been since the earliest times. The alleged rule that forbids the placing of the preposition at the end of a clause or sentence should be disregarded.

The preposition cannot be moved to an earlier place in many sentences, e. g.

What did you do that for?

What a mess this room is in!

The bed had not been slept in

She was good to look at and easy to talk to (W. Somerset Maugham)

There are other kinds of construction which, generally speaking, allow a choice between placing the preposition at the end or placing it earlier—principally relative clauses, in which the preposition can stand before the relative pronoun if it is not placed finally. The choice is very often a matter of style. The preposition has been placed before the relative pronoun in:

The present is the only time in which any duty can be done (C. S. Lewis)

The... veteran for whom nothing has been real since the Big Push (David Lodge)

But it stands at or near the end in:

Harold's Philistine outlook, which she had acquiesced in for ten years (L. P. Hartley)

The sort of attentive memory... that I should have become accustomed to (C. P. Snow)

But notice that some prepositions cannot come at the end:

An annual sum, in return for which she agreed to give me house room (William Trevor)

During which week will the festival be held?

It would be unnatural to write

Which she agreed to give me house room in return for, and

Which week will the festival be held during?

Conversely, some relative clauses will not allow the preposition to stand before the relative pronoun:

The opposition (that) I ran up against was fierce

A sort of world apart which one can quite easily go through life without ever hearing about (George Orwell)

These cannot be changed to:

The opposition against which I ran up...

A sort of world apart without ever hearing about which...

One should be guided by what sounds natural. There is no need to alter the position of the preposition merely in deference to the alleged rule.

4.40 quantity, nouns of

The numerals hundred, thousand, million, billion, trillion, and the words dozen and score are sometimes used in the singular and sometimes in the plural.

1. They always have the singular form if they are qualified by a preceding word, whether it is singular (e. g. a, one) or plural (e. g. many, several, two, three, etc.), and whether or not they are used attributively before a noun or with nothing following:

A hundred days
Three hundred will be enough
I will take two dozen
Two dozen eggs

- ° The use of the plural form after a plural qualifier and when nothing follows is incorrect:
The population is now three millions (correctly three million)

Although they have the singular form, they always take plural verbs, even after the indefinite article:

There were about a dozen of them approaching (Anthony Powell)
There were a score of them at a table apart (J. I. M. Stewart)

2. They take the plural form when they denote indefinite quantities.

Usually they are followed by *of* or stand alone:

Are there any errors? —Yes, hundreds
He has dozens of friends
Many thousands of people are homeless

4.41 reflexive pronouns

The reflexive pronouns are normally used to refer back to the subject of the clause or sentence in which they occur, e. g.

I congratulated myself on outwitting everyone else
Can't you do anything for yourself?

Sometimes it is permissible to use a reflexive pronoun to refer to someone who is not the subject. Very often the person referred to may be the subject of a preceding or following clause, e. g.

It was their success, both with myself and others, that confirmed me in what has since been my career (Evelyn Waugh)
You have the feeling that all their adventures have happened to yourself (George Orwell)
He was furious with the woman, with a rancorous anger that surprised himself (Joyce Cary)

In each of the above, there is a nearby *me*, *you*, or *he* to which the reflexive refers, but to have written *me*, *you*, and *him* respectively in these sentences would not have been grammatically incorrect.

A reflexive pronoun is often used after such words as

as	but for	like
as for	except	than
but	except for	

E. g. For those who, like himself, felt it indelicate to raise an umbrella in the presence of death (Iris Murdoch)

It can be a very useful way to avoid the difficult choice between *I*, *he*, *she*, etc. (which often sounds stilted) and *me*, *him*, *her*, etc. (which are grammatically incorrect) after the words *as*, *but*, and *than*, e. g.

None of them was more surprised than myself that I'd spoken (Lynne Reid Banks)

Here *than I* would be strictly correct, while *than me* would be informal.

Naturally a reflexive pronoun cannot be used in the ways outlined above if confusion would result. One would not write:

John was as surprised as himself that he had been appointed
but would substitute the person's name, or *he himself* was, for *himself*, or recast the sentence.

4.42 relative clauses

A relative clause is a clause introduced by a relative pronoun and used to qualify a preceding noun or pronoun (called its antecedent), e. g. The visitor (antecedent) whom (relative pronoun) you were expecting (remainder of relative clause) has arrived; He who hesitates is lost.

Exceptionally, there are nominal relative clauses in which the antecedent and relative pronoun are combined in one *wh*-pronoun, e. g. What you need is a drink: see what (relative pronoun).

Relative clauses can be either restrictive or non-restrictive. A restrictive relative clause serves to restrict the reference of the antecedent, e. g. A suitcase which has lost its handle is useless. Here the antecedent suitcase is defined or restricted by the clause.

A non-restrictive relative clause is used not to narrow the reference of the antecedent, but to add further information, e. g. He carried the suitcase, which had lost its handle, on one shoulder. Here the suitcase is already identified, and the relative clause adds explanatory information.

Notice that no commas are used to mark off a restrictive relative clause from the rest of the sentence, but when, as above, a non-restrictive relative clause comes in the middle of the sentence, it is marked off by a comma at each end.

There are two kinds of relative pronouns: (i) The *wh*-type: who, whom, whose, which, and, in nominal relative clauses only, what.

(ii) The pronoun that (which can be omitted in some circumstances: see that (relative pronoun), omission of).

When one relative clause is followed by another, the second relative pronoun

(a) may or may not be preceded by a conjunction; and

(b) may or may not be omitted.

(a) A conjunction is not required if the second relative clause qualifies an antecedent which is a word inside the first relative clause:

I found a firm which had a large quantity of components for which they had no use
Here for which... use qualifies components which is part of the relative clause qualifying firm. And or but should not be inserted before for which.

But if the two clauses are parallel, both qualifying the same antecedent, a conjunction is required:

Help me with these shelves which I have to take home but which will not fit in my car
(b) The second relative pronoun can be omitted if (i) it qualifies the same antecedent as the first, and (ii) it plays the same part in its clause as the first (i. e. subject or object):

George, who takes infinite pains and (who) never cuts corners, is our most dependable worker

Here the second who qualifies the same antecedent (George) as the first who, and, like it, is the subject of its clause. It can therefore be omitted.

But if the second relative pronoun plays a different part in its clause, it cannot be omitted:

George, whom everybody likes but who rarely goes to a party, is shy

Here the first relative pronoun, whom, is the object, the second, who, is the subject, in their clauses. The second relative pronoun must be kept.

This rule applies even if the two pronouns have the same form; it is the function that counts:

Like a child spelling out the letters of a word which he cannot read and which if he could would have meaning (Jean Rhys)

The second which cannot be omitted.

See also

preposition at end,

that (relative pronoun), omission of,

what (relative pronoun),

which or that (relative pronouns),

who and whom (interrogative and relative pronouns),

who or which (relative pronouns),

whose or of which in relative clauses,

who/whom or that (relative pronouns).

4.43 shall and will

"The horror of that moment", the King went on, "I shall never, never forget!" "You will, though," the Queen said, "if you don't make a memorandum of it." (Lewis Carroll)

There is considerable confusion about when to use shall and will. Put simply, the traditional rule in standard British English is:

1. In the first person, singular and plural.

a. I shall, we shall express the simple future, e. g.

I am not a manual worker and please God I never shall be one (George Orwell)

In the following pages we shall see good words... losing their edge (C. S. Lewis)

b. I will, we will express intention or determination on the part of the speaker (especially a promise made by him or her), e. g.

I will take you to see her tomorrow morning (P. G. Wodehouse)

I will no longer accept responsibility for the fruitless loss of life (Susan Hill)

"I don't think we will ask Mr. Fraser's opinion", she said coldly (V. S. Pritchett)

2. For the second and third persons, singular and plural, the rule is exactly the converse.

a. You, he, she, it, or they will express the simple future, e. g.

Will it disturb you if I keep the lamp on for a bit? (Susan Hill)

Seraphina will last much longer than a car. She'll probably last longer than you will (Graham Greene)

b. You, he, she, it, or they shall express intention or determination on the part of the speaker or someone other than the actual subject of the verb, especially a promise made by the speaker to or about the subject, e. g.

Today you shall be with me in Paradise (NEB)

One day you shall know my full story (Evelyn Waugh)

Shall the common man be pushed back into the mud, or shall he not? (George Orwell)

The two uses of will, and one of those of shall, are well illustrated by:

"I will follow you to the ends of the earth," replied Susan, passionately. "It will not be necessary," said George.

"I am only going down to the coal-cellar. I shall spend the next half-hour or so there." (P. G. Wodehouse)

In informal usage I will and we will are quite often used for the simple future, e. g.

I will be a different person when I live in England (Character in work by Jean Rhys)

More often the distinction is covered up by the contracted form 'll, e. g.

I don't quite know when I'll get the time to write again (Susan Hill)

° The use of will for shall in the first person is not regarded as fully acceptable in formal usage.

4.44 should and would

When used for (a) the future in the past or (b) the conditional,

should goes with I and we

would goes with you, he, she, it, and they

a. The future in the past. First person:

I had supposed these to be the last... I should ever set eyes on (Anthony Powell)

Julia and I, who had left..., thinking we should not return (Evelyn Waugh)

The person's imagined statement or thought at the time was:

These are the last I shall ever set eyes on

We shall not return

with shall, not will (see shall and will)

Second and third persons:

I told you that you would find Russian difficult to learn

He was there. Later, he would not be there (Susan Hill)

The person's statement or thought at the time was

You will find Russian difficult to learn

He will not be there

b. The conditional.

First person:

I should view with the strongest disapproval any proposal to abolish manhood suffrage
(C. S. Lewis)

If we had not hurried we should never have got a seat

Second and third persons:

If you cared about your work, you would make more effort

Isobel would almost certainly have gone in any case (Anthony Powell)

In informal usage, I would and we would are very common in both kinds of sentence:

I wondered whether I would have to wear a black suit

I would have been content, I would never have repeated it (Both examples from
Graham Greene)

The use of would with the first person is understandable, because should (in all persons)
has a number of uses which can clash with the conditional and the future in the past;
sometimes the context does not make it clear, for example, whether I should do means "it
would be the case that I did" or "I ought to do", e. g.

I wondered whether, when I was cross-examined

I should admit that I knew the defendant

° This use of I would and we would is not, however, regarded as fully acceptable in formal
language.

See also I should or I would

4.45 singular or plural

1. When subject and complement are different in number (i. e. one is singular, the other
plural), the verb normally agrees with the subject, e. g.

(Plural subject)

Ships are his chief interest

Their wages were a mere pittance

Liqueur chocolates are our speciality

The Biblical The wages of sin is death reflects an obsolete idiom by which wages took a
singular verb.

(Singular subject)

The ruling passion of his life was social relationships

What we need is customers

Our speciality is liqueur chocolates

2. A plural word or phrase used as a name, title, or quotation counts as singular, e. g.

Sons and Lovers has always been one of Lawrence's most popular novels

Coloured persons is the term applied to those of mixed white and native blood

3. A singular phrase that happens to end with a plural word should nevertheless be followed
by a singular verb, e. g.

Everyone except the French wants (not want) Britain to join

One in six has (not have) this problem

See also -ics, nouns in, quantity, nouns of, -s plural or singular, what (relative pronoun).

4.46 split infinitive

The split infinitive is the name given to the separation of to from the infinitive by means of
an adverb (or sometimes an adverbial phrase), e. g. He used to continually refer to the
subject. In this the adverb continually splits the infinitive to refer into two parts.

It is often said that an infinitive should never be split. This is an artificial rule that can
produce unnecessarily contorted sentences.

Rather, it is recommended that a split infinitive should be avoided by placing the adverb
before or after the infinitive, unless this leads to clumsiness or ambiguity. If it does, one
should either allow the split infinitive to stand, or recast the sentence.

1. Good writers usually avoid splitting the infinitive by placing the adverb before the
infinitive:

I am not able, and I do not want, completely to abandon the world-view that I acquired in childhood (George Orwell)

One meets people who have learned actually to prefer the tinned fruit to the fresh (C. S. Lewis)

He did not want positively to suggest that she was dominant (Iris Murdoch)

On the other hand, it is quite natural in speech, and permissible in writing, to say:

What could it be like to actually live in France?

To really let the fact that these mothers were mothers sink in (Both examples from Kingsley Amis)

Only one thing stops me from jumping up and screaming..., it is to deliberately think myself back into that hot light (Doris Lessing)

2. Avoidance of ambiguity.

When an adverb closely qualifies the infinitive verb it may often be better to split the infinitive than to move the adverb to another position. The following example is ambiguous in writing, though in speech stress on certain words would make the meaning clear:

It fails completely to carry conviction

Either it means "It totally fails...", in which case completely should precede fails, or it means "It fails to carry complete conviction", in which case that should be written, or the infinitive should be split.

3. Avoidance of clumsiness.

It took more than an excited elderly man... socially to discompose him... (Anthony Powell)

In this example socially belongs closely with discompose: it is not "to discompose in a social way" but "to cause social discomposure" or "to destroy social composure". There are quite a number of adverb + verb collocations of this kind. When they occur in the infinitive, it may be better either to split the infinitive or to recast the sentence than to separate the adverb from the verb.

4. Unavoidable split infinitive.

There are certain adverbial constructions which must immediately precede the verb and therefore split the infinitive, e. g. more than:

Enough new ships are delivered to more than make up for the old ones being retired

And a writer may have sound stylistic reasons for allowing a parenthetical expression to split an infinitive:

It would be an act of gratuitous folly to, as he had put it to Mildred, make trouble for himself at this stage (Iris Murdoch)

4.47 -s plural or singular

Some nouns, though they have the plural ending -s, are nevertheless treated as singulars, taking singular verbs and pronouns referring back to them.

1. News

2. Diseases:

measles	ricketts
mumps	shingles

Measles and ricketts can also be treated as ordinary plural nouns.

3. Games:

billiards	dominoes
ninepins	bowls
draughts	skittles
darts	fives

4. Countries:

the Bahamas	the Philippines
the Netherlands	the United States

These are treated as singular when considered as a unit, which they commonly are in a political context, or when the complement is singular, e. g.

The Philippines is a predominantly agricultural country

The United States has withdrawn its ambassador
The Bahamas and the Philippines are also the geographical names of the groups of islands which the two nations comprise, and in this use can be treated as plurals, e. g.

The Bahamas were settled by British subjects
Flanders and Wales are always singular. So are the city names Athens, Brussels, Naples, etc.

See also -ics, nouns in

4.48 subjects joined by (either...) or

When two singular subjects (either may be a noun, a pronoun, or a noun phrase) are joined by or or either... or, the strict rule is that they require a singular verb and singular pronouns, since or (or either... or) indicates that only one of them is the logical subject:

Either Peter or John has had his breakfast already

A traffic warden or a policeman is always on the watch in this street

However, "at all times there has been a tendency to use the plural with two or more singular subjects when their mutual exclusion is not emphasized" (OED), e. g.

On which rage or wantonness vented themselves (George Eliot)

When one of the subjects joined by or is plural, it is best to put the verb in the plural, and place the plural subject nearer to the verb:

Either the child or the parents are to blame

When one subject is I, we, or you, and the other is a noun or a third person pronoun, or when the subjects are you and I, the verb is usually made to agree with the nearer of the two subjects:

Either he or I am going to win Either he or you have got to give in

Either you or your teacher has made a mistake

This form of expression very often sounds awkward, especially when the sentence is a question:

Am I or he going to win?

Is he or we wrong?

It is usually best to recast the sentence by adding another verb:

Am I going to win, or is he?

Is he wrong, or are we?

Either he has got to give in, or you have

4.49 subjunctive

The subjunctive mood is indicated by the basic form of the verb, a form that is identical with the bare infinitive and imperative. In most verbs, e. g. do, give, and make, this will be the same as all the persons of the present tense except the third, which ends in -s. In the verb to be, however, the subjunctive is be, whereas the present tense is am, are, or is. For the past subjunctive of to be (were) see were or was

The subjunctive is normal, and quite familiar, in a number of fixed expressions which cause no problems:

Be that as it may

Come what may

God bless you

God save the Queen

Heaven help us

Long live the Queen

So be it

Suffice it to say that

Heaven forbid

There are two other uses of the subjunctive that may cause difficulty, but they are entirely optional. This means that the ordinary user of English need not be troubled by the use of the subjunctive, apart from the past subjunctive were.

1. In that-clauses after words expressing command, hope, intention, wish, etc. Typical introducing words are

be adamant that	propose that
demand that	proposal that
insist that	resolve that
be insistent that	suggest that
insistence that	suggestion that

Typical examples are:

He had been insisting that they keep the night of the twenty-second free (C. P. Snow)
Joseph was insistent that his wishes be carried out (W. Somerset Maugham)
Chance... dictated that I be reading Sterne when... Bellow's new novel arrived (Frederic Raphael)
Your suggestion that I fly out (David Lodge)

Until recently this use of the subjunctive was restricted to very formal language, where it is still usual, e. g.

The Lord Chancellor put the motion that the House go into Committee

It is, however, a usual American idiom, and is now quite acceptable in British English, but there is no necessity to use the subjunctive in such contexts. Should or may with the infinitive, or (especially in informal use) the ordinary indicative, depending on the context, will do equally well:

Your demand that he should pay the money back surprised him

I insist that the boy goes to school this minute

° Beware of constructions in which the sense hangs on a fine distinction between subjunctive and indicative, e. g.

The most important thing for Argentina is that Britain recognize her sovereignty over the Falklands

The implication is that Britain does not recognize it. A small slip that changed recognize to recognizes would disastrously reverse this implication. The use of should recognize would render the sense quite unmistakable.

2. In certain concessive and conditional clauses, i. e. clauses introduced by though and if, the subjunctive can be used to express reserve on the part of the speaker about an action or state which is contemplated or in prospect, e. g.

Though he be the devil himself he shall do as I say

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow (Authorized Version)

It is a fine thing if a man endure the pain of undeserved suffering (NEB)

The University is a place where a poor man, if he be virtuous, may live a life of dignity and simplicity (A. C. Benson)

If this be true, then we are all to blame

As the examples show, this is restricted to very formal and exalted language. It should not be used in ordinary prose, where sometimes the indicative and sometimes an auxiliary such as may are entirely acceptable, e. g.

Though he may be an expert, he should listen to advice

If this is the case, then I am in error

4.50 than, case following

A personal pronoun following than should have the case that it would have if a verb were supplied. In the following sentences, the subjective case is required because the personal pronoun would be the subject:

Other people have failed to grasp this, people much cleverer than I (in full, than I am)

We pay more rent than they (in full, than they do)

In the sentence below, the objective case is used, because the pronoun would be the object if there were a verb:

Jones treated his wife badly. I think that he liked his dog better than her (in full, than he liked her)

Informal English permits the objective case to be used, no matter what case the pronoun would have if a verb were supplied:

You do it very well. Much better than me

This is unacceptable in formal usage. The preferred alternative, with the subjective, often sounds stilted. When this is so, it can be avoided by supplying the verb:

We pay more rent than they do

The interrogative and relative pronoun whom is always used after than, rather than the subjective form who:

Professor Smith, than whom there is scarcely anyone better qualified to judge, believes it to be pre-Roman

4.51 that (conjunction), omission of

1. The conjunction that introducing a noun clause and used after verbs of saying, thinking, knowing, etc., can often be omitted in informal usage:

I told him (that) he was wrong

He knew (that) I was right

Are you sure (that) this is the place?

Generally speaking, the omission of that confers a familiar tone on the sentence, and is not usually appropriate in formal prose.

That should never be omitted if other parts of the sentence (apart from the indirect object) intervene:

I told him, as I have told everyone, that he was wrong

Are you sure in your own mind that this is the place?

The omission of that makes it difficult, in written prose, to follow the sense.

2. When the conjunction that is part of the correlative pairs of conjunctions so... that and such... that, or of the compound conjunctions so that, now that, it can be omitted in informal usage.

° It should not be omitted in formal style:

He walked so fast (or at such a speed) that I could not keep up

I'll move my car so that you can park in the drive

Are you lonely now that your children have left home?

4.52 that (relative pronoun), omission of

The relative pronoun that can often be omitted. Its omission is much more usual informally than formally.

In formal contexts the omission of that is best limited to relative clauses which are fairly short and which stand next to their antecedents:

The best thing (that) you can do is make up for lost time

None of the cars (that) I saw had been damaged

Nothing (that) I could say made any difference

That cannot be omitted when it is the subject of the relative clause, e. g.

Nothing that occurred to me made any difference

None of the cars that were under cover had been damaged

See also adverbial relative clauses and way, relative clause following.

4.53 there is or there are

In a sentence introduced by there + part of the verb to be, the latter agrees in number with the noun, noun phrase, or pronoun which follows:

There was a great deal to be said for this scheme

There are many advantages in doing it this way

In very informal language there is or there was is often heard before a plural:

There's two coloured-glass windows in the chapel (Character in work by Evelyn Waugh)

° This is non-standard.

4.54 to

The preposition to can stand at the end of a clause or sentence as a substitute for an omitted to-infinitive, e. g.

He had tried not to think about Emma..., but of course it was impossible not to (Iris Murdoch)

I gave him her message, as I should have been obliged to if she had died (C. P. Snow)
This is standard usage.

4.55 unattached phrases

An adjectival or adverbial phrase, introducing a sentence, must qualify the subject of the sentence, e. g.

While not entirely in agreement with the plan, he had no serious objections to it

After two days on a life-raft, the survivors were rescued by helicopter

The introductory phrases While... plan and After... life-raft qualify the subjects he and the survivors respectively.

It is a common error to begin a sentence with a phrase of this kind, anticipating a suitable subject, and then to continue the sentence with a quite different subject, e. g.

After six hours without food in a plane on the perimeter at Heathrow, the flight was cancelled

The phrase After... Heathrow anticipates a subject like the passengers: a flight cannot spend six hours without food in a plane on an airport perimeter. Such a sentence should either have a new beginning, e. g.

After the passengers had spent six hours...

or a new main clause, e. g.

After six hours ...Heathrow, the passengers learnt that the flight had been cancelled

4.56 used to

The negative and interrogative of used to can be formed in two ways:

(i) Negative: used not to Interrogative: used X to?

This formation follows the pattern of the other auxiliary verbs.

Examples:

Used you to beat your mother? (G. B. Shaw)

You used not to have a moustache, used you? (Evelyn Waugh)

(ii) Negative: did not use to, didn't use to

Interrogative: did X use to?

This formation is the same as that used with regular verbs. Examples:

She didn't use to find sex revolting (John Braine)

Did you use to be a flirt? (Eleanor Farjeon)

Either form is acceptable. On the whole used you to, used he to, etc. tend to sound rather stilted.

° The correct spellings of the negative forms are:

usedn't to and didn't use to

not:

usen't to and didn't used to

4.57 way, relative clause following

(The) way can be followed by a relative clause with or without that. There is no need for the relative clause to contain the preposition in:

It may have been the way he smiled (Jean Rhys)

Whatever way they happened would be an ugly way (Iris Murdoch)

She couldn't give a dinner party the way the young lad's mother could (William Trevor)

4.58 were or was

There is often confusion about whether to use the past subjunctive were or the past indicative was.

Formal usage requires were

1. In conditional sentences where the condition is "unreal", e. g.
It would probably be more marked if the subject were more dangerous (George Orwell)
(The condition is unreal because "the subject" is not very "dangerous" in fact) If anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse (Jean Rhys) (The condition is regarded as unlikely)
 2. Following as if and as though, e. g.
He wore it with an air of melancholy, as though it were court mourning (Evelyn Waugh)
(For a permissible exception see as if, as though. in topic 3.0)
 3. In that-clauses after to wish, e. g.
I wish I were going instead of you
 4. In the fixed expressions As it were, If I were you
- Notice that in all these constructions the clause with were refers to something unreal, something that in fact is not or will not be the case.
- Were may also be used in dependent questions, where there is doubt of the answer, e. g.
Hilliard wondered whether Barton were not right after all (Susan Hill)
Her mother suddenly demanded to know if she were pregnant (Joyce Cary)
- This is not obligatory even in very formal prose. Was is acceptable instead.

4.59 we (with phrase following)

Expressions consisting of we or us followed by a qualifying word or phrase, e. g. we English, us English, are often misused with the wrong case of the first person plural pronoun. In fact the rules are exactly the same as for we or us standing alone.

If the expression is the subject, we should be used:

(Correct) Not always laughing as heartily as we English are supposed to do (J. B. Priestley)

(Incorrect) We all make mistakes, even us anarchists (Character in work by Alison Lurie) (Substitute we anarchists)

If the expression is the object or the complement of a preposition, us should be used:

(Correct) To us English, Europe is not a very vivid conception (Incorrect) The Manchester Guardian has said some nice things about we in the North-East

4.60 what (relative pronoun)

What can be used as a relative pronoun only when introducing nominal relative clauses, e. g.

So much of what you tell me is strange, different from what I was led to expect (Jean Rhys)

In this kind of relative clause, the antecedent and relative pronoun are combined in the one word what, which can be regarded as equivalent to that which or the thing(s) which.

° What cannot act as a relative pronoun qualifying an antecedent in standard English. This use is found only in non-standard speech, e. g.

The young gentleman what's arranged everything (Character in work by Evelyn Waugh)

A what-clause used as the subject of a sentence almost always takes a singular verb, even if there is plural complement, e. g.

What one first became aware of was the pictures (J. I. M. Stewart)

What interests him is less events... than the reverberations they set up (Frederic Raphael)

Very occasionally the form of the sentence may under the plural more natural, e. g.

What once were great houses are now petty offices

I have few books, and what there are do not help me

4.61 which or that (relative pronouns)

There is a degree of uncertainty about whether to use which or that as the relative pronoun qualifying a non-personal antecedent (for personal antecedents see who/whom or that (relative pronouns)).

The general rule is that which is used in relative clauses to which the reader's attention is to be drawn, while that is used in clauses which mention what is already known or does not need special emphasis.

Which is almost always used in non-restrictive clauses, i. e. those that add further information about an antecedent already defined by other words or the context. Examples:

The men are getting rum issue, which they deserve (Susan Hill)

Narrow iron beds with blue rugs on them, which Miss Fanshawe has to see are all kept tidy (William Trevor)

° The use of that in non-restrictive clauses should be avoided. It is not uncommon in informal speech, and is sometimes employed by good writers to suggest a tone of familiarity, e. g.

Getting out of Alec's battered old car that looked as if it had been in collision with many rocks, Harold had a feeling of relief (L. P. Hartley)

It should not, however, be used in ordinary prose.

Both which and that can be used in restrictive relative clauses, i. e. clauses that limit or define the antecedent.

There is no infallible rule to determine which should be used. Some guidelines follow:

1. Which preferred.

a. Clauses which add significant information often sound better with which, e. g.

Was I counting on Israel to work some miracle which would give me the strength?
(Lynne Reid Banks)

Not nearly enough for the social position which they had to keep up (D. H. Lawrence)

b. Clauses which are separated from their antecedent, especially when separated by another noun, sound better with which, e. g.

Larry told her the story of the young airman which I narrated at the beginning of this book (W. Somerset Maugham)

c. When a preposition governs the relative pronoun, which preceded by the preposition is often a better choice than that with the preposition at the end of the sentence (see also preposition at end), e.g.

I'm telling you about a dream in which ordinary things are marvellous (William Trevor)
(A dream that ordinary things are marvellous in would not sound natural)

The inheritance to which we are born is one that nothing can destroy (NEB)

(The inheritance that we are born to would sound very informal and unsuited to the context)

2. That preferred.

In clauses that do not fall into the above categories that can usually be used. There is no reason to reject that if

a. the antecedent is impersonal,

b. the clause is restrictive,

c. no preposition precedes the relative pronoun, and

d. the sentence does not sound strained or excessively colloquial.

Examples:

I read the letters, none of them very revealing, that littered his writing table (Evelyn Waugh)

He fell back on the old English courtesy that he had consciously perfected to combat the increasing irritability that came with old age and arthritis (Angus Wilson)

In these examples, which would be acceptable, but is not necessary.

When the antecedent is an indefinite pronoun (e. g. anything, everything, nothing, something) or contains a superlative adjective qualifying the impersonal antecedent (e. g. the biggest car, the most expensive hat) English idiom tends to prefer that to which:

Is there nothing small that the children could buy you for Christmas?

This is the most expensive hat that you could have bought
Note that that can sometimes be used when one is not sure whether to use who or which:
This was the creature, neither child nor woman, that drove me through the dusk that
summer evening (Evelyn Waugh)

4.62 who and whom (interrogative and relative pronouns)

1. Formal usage restricts the use of the interrogative and relative pronoun who to the subject of the clause only, e. g.

I who'd never read anything before but the newspaper (W. Somerset Maugham)

When the pronoun is the object or the complement of a preposition, whom must be used:

Why are we being served by a man whom neither of us likes? (William Trevor)

The real question is food (or freedom) for whom (C. S. Lewis)

A midget nobleman to whom all doors were open (Evelyn Waugh)

° The use of who as object or prepositional complement is acceptable informally, but should not be carried over into serious prose, e. g.

Who are you looking for?

The person who I'm looking for is rather elusive

See also than, case following

2. Whom for who.

Whom is sometimes mistakenly used for who because the writer believes it to be the object, or the complement of a preposition.

a. For the interrogative pronoun the rule is: the case of the pronoun who/whom is determined by its role in the interrogative clause, not by any word in the main clause:

He never had any doubt about who was the real credit to the family (J. I. M. Stewart)

Who here is the subject of was. One should not be confused by about, which governs the whole clause, not who alone.

The error is seen in:

Whom among our poets... could be called one of the interior decorators of the 1950s?
(Read Who..because it is the subject of the passive verb be called)

Whom is correct in:

He knew whom it was from (L. P. Hartley)

(Here whom is governed by from)

Whom he was supposed to be fooling, he couldn't imagine (David Lodge)

(Here whom is the object of fooling)

b. For the relative pronoun, when followed by a parenthetical clause such as they say, he thinks, I believe, etc., the rule is: the case of the pronoun who/whom is determined by the part it plays in the relative clause if the parenthetical statement is omitted:

Sheikh Yamani who they say is the richest man in the Middle East

(Not whom they say since who is the subject of is, not the object of say)

But whom is correct in:

Sheikh Yamani whom they believe to be the richest man in the Middle East

Here they believe is not parenthetical, since it could not be removed leaving the sentence intact. Whom is its object: the simple clause would be They believe him to be the richest man.

See also I who, you who, etc.

4.63 who or which (relative pronouns)

If a wh-pronoun is used to introduce a relative clause it must be who (whom) if the antecedent is personal, e. g.

Suzanne was a woman who had no notion of reticence (W. Somerset Maugham)

But it must be which if the antecedent is non-personal. e. g.

There was a suppressed tension about her which made me nervous (Lynne Reid Banks)

If the relative clause is non-restrictive, i. e. it adds significant new information about an antecedent already defined, the wh-type of pronoun must be used (as above).

If the relative clause is restrictive, i. e. it defines or limits the reference of the antecedent, one can use either the appropriate *wh*-pronoun (as indicated above), or the non-variable pronoun *that*. For guidance about this choice see *which or that (relative pronouns)*, *who/whom or that (relative pronouns)*.

4.64 whose or of which in relative clauses

The relative pronoun *whose* can be used as the possessive of *which*, i. e. with reference to a non-personal antecedent, just as much as it can as the possessive of *who*. The rule sometimes enunciated that *of which* must always be used after a non-personal antecedent should be ignored, as it is by good writers, e. g.

The little book whose yellowish pages she knew (Virginia Woolf)

A robe whose weight and stiff folds expressed her repose (Evelyn Waugh)

A narrow side street, whose windows had flower boxes and painted shutters (Doris Lessing)

In some sentences, *of which* would be almost impossible, e. g.

The lawns about whose closeness of cut his father worried the gardener daily (Susan Hill)

There is, of course, no rule prohibiting *of which* if it sounds natural, e. g.

A little town the name of which I have forgotten (W. Somerset Maugham)

Whose can only be used as the non-personal possessive in relative clauses.

Interrogative *whose* refers only to persons, as in *Whose book is this?*

4.65 who/whom or that (relative pronouns)

In formal usage, *who/whom* is always acceptable as the relative pronoun following an antecedent that denotes a person. (For the choice between *who* and *whom* see *who and whom (interrogative and relative pronouns)*).

In non-restrictive relative clauses, i. e. those which add significant new information about an antecedent already defined, *who/whom* is obligatory, e. g.

It was not like Coulter, who was a cheerful man (Susan Hill)

In restrictive relative clauses, i. e. those which define or limit the reference of the antecedent, *who/whom* is usually quite acceptable:

The masters who taught me Divinity told me that biblical texts were highly untrustworthy (Evelyn Waugh)

It is generally felt that the relative pronoun *that* is more impersonal than *who/whom*, and is therefore slightly depreciatory if applied to a person. Hence it tends to be avoided in formal usage.

However, if

(i) the relative pronoun is the object, and

(ii) the personality of the antecedent is suppressed

that may well be appropriate, e. g.

Then the woman that they actually caught and pinned down would not have been Margot (Evelyn Waugh)

They looked now just like the GIs that one saw in Viet Nam (David Lodge)

Informally *that* is acceptable with any personal antecedent, e. g.

You got it from the man that stole the horse (G. B. Shaw)

Honey, it's me that should apologize (David Lodge)

° This should be avoided in formal style.

4.66 you and I or you and me

When a personal pronoun is linked by *and* or *or* to a noun or another pronoun there is often confusion about which case to put the pronoun in.

In fact the rule is exactly as it would be for the pronoun standing alone.

1. If the two words linked by *and* or *or* constitute the subject, the pronoun should be in the subjective case, e. g.

Only she and her mother cared for the old house

That's what we would do, that is, John and I

Who could go? —Either you or he

The use of the objective case is quite common informal speech, but it is non-standard, e. g. examples from the speech of characters in novels)

Perhaps only her and Mrs Natwick had stuck to the christened name (Patrick White)

That's how we look at it, me and Martha (Kingsley Amis)

Either Mary had to leave or me (David Lodge)

If the two words linked by and or or constitute the object of the verb, or the complement of a reposition, the objective case must be used:

The afternoon would suit her and John better

It was time for Sebastian and me to go down to the drawing-room (Evelyn Waugh)

The use of the subjective case is very common formally. It probably arises from an exaggerated fear of the error indicated under 1 above.

° It remains, however, non-standard, e. g.

It was this that set Charles and I talking of old times

Why is it that people like you and I are so unpopular?

(Character in work by William Trevor)

Between you and I

This last expression is very commonly heard. Between you and me should always be substituted.

A.0 Appendix A. Principles of Punctuation

A.1 apostrophe

1. Used to indicate the possessive case: see possessive case
2. Used to mark an omission, e. g. e'er, we'll, he's, '69.
 - ° Sometimes written, but unnecessary, in a number of curtailed words, e. g. bus, cello, flu, phone, plane (not 'bus, etc.). See also plural formation.

A.2 brackets

See:

1. parentheses
2. square brackets

A.3 colon

1. Links two grammatically complete clauses, but marks a step forward, from introduction to main theme, from cause to effect, or from premiss to conclusion, e. g. To commit sin is to break God's law: sin, in fact, is lawlessness.
2. Introduces a list of items (a dash should not be added), e. g. The following were present: J. Smith, J. Brown, P. Thompson, M. Jones. It is used after such expressions as for example, namely, the following, to resume, to sum up.

A.4 comma

The least emphatic separating mark of punctuation, used:

1. Between adjectives which each qualify a noun in the same way, e. g. A cautious, eloquent man.
But when adjectives qualify the noun in different ways, or when one adjective qualifies another, no comma is used, e. g. A distinguished foreign author, a bright red tie.
2. To separate items (including the last) in a list of more than two items, e. g. Potatoes, peas, and carrots; Potatoes, peas, or carrots; Potatoes, peas, etc. ; Red, white, and blue.
 - ° But A black and white TV set.
3. To separate co-ordinated main clauses, e. g. Cars will turn here, and coaches will go straight on. But not when they are closely linked, e. g. Do as I tell you and you'll never regret it.
4. To mark the beginning and end of a parenthetical word or phrase, e. g. I am sure, however, that it will not happen; Fred, who is bald, complained of the cold.
 - ° Not with restrictive relative clauses, e. g. Men who are bald should wear hats.
5. After a participial or verbless clause, a salutation, or a vocative, e. g. Having had breakfast, I went for a walk; The sermon over, the congregation filed out or The sermon being over, (etc.); My son, give me thy heart.
 - ° Not The sermon, being over, (etc.)
 - ° No comma with expressions like My friend Lord X or My son John.
6. To separate a phrase or subordinate clause from the main clause so as to avoid misunderstanding, e. g. In the valley below, the villages looked very small; He did not go to church, because he was playing golf; In 1982, 1918 seemed a long time ago.
 - ° A comma should not be used to separate a phrasal subject from its predicate, or a verb from an object that is a clause: A car with such a highpowered engine, should not let you down and They believed, that nothing could go wrong are both incorrect.
7. Following words introducing direct speech, e. g. They answered, "Here we are."
8. Following Dear Sir, Dear John, etc., in letters, and after Yours sincerely, etc.
 - ° No comma is needed between month and year in dates, e. g. In December 1982 or between number and road in addresses, e. g. 12 Acacia Avenue.

A.5 dash

1. The en rule is distinct (in print) from the hyphen (see hyphens and is used to join pairs or groups of words wherever movement or tension, rather than cooperation or unity, is felt: it

is often equivalent to to or versus, e. g. The 1914-18 war; current-voltage characteristic; The London-Horsham-Brighton route; The Fischer-Spassky match; The Marxist-Trotskyite split.

° Note The Marxist-Leninist position; The Franco-Prussian war with hyphens.

It is also used for joint authors, e. g. The Lloyd-Jones hypothesis (two men), distinct from The Lloyd-Jones hypothesis (one man with double-barrelled name).

2. The em rule (the familiar dash) is used to mark an interruption in the structure of a sentence. A pair of them can be used to enclose a parenthetical remark or to make the ending and resumption of a statement interrupted by an interlocutor; e. g. He was not—you may disagree with me, Henry—much of an artist; “I didn’t—” “Speak up, boy!”—hear anything; I was just standing near by.” It can be used informally to replace the colon (use 1).

A.6 exclamation mark

Used after an exclamatory word, phrase, or sentence. It usually counts as the concluding full stop, but need not, e. g. Hail source of Being! universal Soul! It may also be used within square brackets, after a quotation, to express the editor’s amusement, dissent, or surprise.

A.7 full stop

1. Used at the end of all sentences which are not questions or exclamations. The next word should normally begin with a capital letter.

2. Used after abbreviations: see abbreviations If a point making an abbreviation comes at the end of a sentence, it also serves as the closing full stop, e. g. She also kept dogs, cats, birds, etc. but She also kept pets (dogs, cats, birds, etc.).

3. When a sentence concludes with a quotation which itself ends with a full stop, question mark, or exclamation mark, no further full stop is needed, e. g. He cried “Be off!” But the child would not move. But if the quotation is a short statement, and the introducing sentence has much greater weight, the full stop is put outside the quotation marks, e. g. Over the entrance to the temple at Delphi were written the words “know thyself”.

A.8 hyphen:

see hyphens

A.9 parentheses

Enclose:

1. Interpolations and remarks made by the writer of the text himself, e. g. Mr. X (as I shall call him) now spoke.

2. An authority, definition, explanation, reference, or translation.

3. In the report of a speech, interruptions by the audience.

4. Reference letters or figures (which do not then need a full stop), e. g. (1), (a).

A.10 period:

see full stop

A.11 question mark

1. Follows every question which expects a separate answer. The next word should begin with a capital letter.

° Not used after indirect questions, e. g. He asked me why I was there.

2. May be placed before a word, etc., whose accuracy is doubted, e. g. T. Tallis ?1505-85.

A.12 quotation marks

1. Single quotation marks are used for a first quotation; double for a quotation within this; single again for a further quotation inside that.

2. The closing quotation mark should come before all punctuation marks unless these form part of the quotation itself, e. g. Did Nelson really say "Kiss me, Hardy"? but Then she asked "What is your name?" (see also full stop 3 in topic A.7).

The comma at the end of a quotation, when words such as he said follow, is regarded as equivalent to the final full stop of the speaker's utterance, and is kept inside the quotation, e. g. "That is nonsense," he said. The commas on either side of he said, etc., when these words interrupt the quotation, should be outside the quotation marks, e. g. "That", he said, "is nonsense." But the first comma goes inside the quotation marks if it would be part of the utterance even if there were no interruption, e. g. "That, my dear fellow," he said, "is nonsense."

3. Quotation marks (and roman type) are used when citing titles of articles in magazines, chapters of books, poems not published separately, and songs.

° Not for titles of books of the Bible; nor for any passage that represents only the substance of an extract, or has any grammatical alterations, and is not a verbatim quotation.

Titles of books and magazines are usually printed in italic.

A.13 semicolon

Separates those parts of a sentence between which there is a more distinct break than would call for a comma, but which are too closely connected to be made into separate sentences. Typically these will be clauses of similar importance and grammatical construction, e. g. To err is human; to forgive, divine.

A.14 square brackets

Enclose comments, corrections, explanations, interpolations, notes, or translations, which were not in the original text, but have been added by subsequent authors, editors, or others, e. g. My right honourable friend [John Smith] is mistaken.

B.0 Appendix B. Cliches and Modish and Inflated Diction

A cliché is a phrase that has become worn out and emptied of meaning by over-frequent and careless use. Never to use clichés at all would be impossible: they are too common, and too well embedded in the fabric of the language. On many occasions they can be useful in communicating simple ideas economically, and are often a means of conveying general sociability. When writing serious prose, however, in which clear and precise communication is intended, one should guard against allowing clichés to do the work which the words of one's own choosing could do better. "Modish and inflated diction" is a rough and ready way of referring to a body of words and phrases that is familiar, but hard to delineate and delimit. In origin some of these expressions are often scientific or technical and are, in their original context, assigned a real and useful meaning; others are the creation of popular writers and broadcasters. What they all have in common is their grip on the popular mind, so that they have come to be used in all kinds of general contexts where they are unnecessary, ousting ordinary words that are better but sound less impressive. As their popularity and frequency increases, so their real denotative value drains away, a process that closely resembles monetary inflation. As with clichés, it would be difficult, and not necessarily desirable, to ban these expressions from our usage completely, but, again, one should carefully guard against using them either because they sound more learned and up to date than the more commonplace words in one's vocabulary, or as a short cut in communicating ideas that would be better set out in simple, clear, basic vocabulary.

The list that follows does not claim to be an exhaustive collection of clichés or of modish diction, but presents some contemporary expressions which are most frequently censured and are avoided by good writers.

actual (tautologous or meaningless, e. g. Is this an actual Roman coin?)

actually (as a filler, e. g. Actually it's time I was going)

articulate (verb = express)
at the end of the day
at this moment (or point) in time
-awareness (e. g. brand-awareness)
ball game (a different, etc., -)
basically (as a filler)
by and large (sometimes used with no meaning)
-centred (e. g. discovery-centred)
conspicuous by one's absence
constructive (used tautologously, e. g. A constructive suggestion)
definitely
-deprivation (e. g. status-deprivation)
dialogue
dimension (= feature, factor)
-directed (e. g. task-directed)
dispense (= give)
environment
escalate (= increase, intensify)
eventuate (= result)
framework (in the framework of)
fresh (= new, renewed, etc.)
grind to a halt (= end, stop)
identify (= find, discover)
if you like (explanatory tag)
integrate, integrated
in terms of
in the order of (= about)
in this day and age
-ize (suffix, forming vogue words, e. g. normalize, permanentize, prioritize, respectabilize)
leave severely alone
life-style
look closely at
loved ones (= relatives)
low profile (keep, or maintain, a-)
massive (= huge)
matrix
meaningful (can often be omitted without any change in meaning)
methodology (= method)
-minded (e. g. company-minded)
name of the game, the
-oriented (e. g. marketing-oriented)
overkill
participate in
persona (= character)
proliferation (= a number)
proposition
quantum jump
real (especially in very real)
-related (e. g. church-related)
simplistic (= oversimplified)
sort of (as a filler)
spell (= mean, involve)
target (figuratively used)
terminate (= end)
totality of, the

track-record (= record)
until such time as
utilize (= use)
viability
vibrant
you know (as a filler)
you name it

See also the entries in Vocabulary for:

antithetical	hopefully	ongoing
author	impact	overly
aware	industrial action	overview
character	interface	parameter
crucial	ironic	pivotal
decimate	limited	predicate
dichotomy	literally	pre-empt
differential	locate	pristine
dilemma	maximize	proportion
event (in the event that)	nature	region (in the region of)
excess (in excess of)	neighbourhood (in the neighborhood of)	scenario
exposure	no way	situation
feasible	obligate	substantial
following		

C.0 Appendix C. English Overseas

Outside the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, English is an important language in many countries, and the major language of four—the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—and of a large minority in another, South Africa. Despite the great distances separating these five English-speaking communities from each other and from the British Isles, and the great social and cultural differences between them, the forms of English which they use remain mutually intelligible to a remarkable degree. Partly this is because all English-speaking communities have held to a standard spelling system. There are a number of points of difference in spelling between the English of the United States and that of Britain (the other communities follow the British mode, except that many US spellings are usual, or acceptable, in Canada); but these are all relatively minor. The major differences are in pronunciation, vocabulary, and, to a lesser degree, grammar.

C.1 1. The United States

The main differences between General American pronunciation and British Received Pronunciation are set out on pp. 78-9. The General American accent is a supra-regional way of speaking acceptable throughout the country, but there are very marked differences of accent between different regions of the United States. Two varieties familiar in Great Britain are “Brooklynese” (the New York City accent), in which earl and oil sound alike (the sound is somewhere between the two), and the southern “drawl” (the accent of the states from Virginia southward) in which I and time sound like ah and tahm.

The difference in vocabulary between American and British English is too well known to need extensive illustration. Most British people are familiar with many American equivalents for British terms, e. g. bathrobe (dressing gown), checkers (draughts), cookie (biscuit), elevator (lift), flyer (handbill), gas (petrol), vest (waistcoat). It is not so often realized that many words and phrases now normal in Britain originated in North America, e. g. to fall for, to fly off the handle, off-beat, punch line, quiz (as a noun), round trip, round-up, to snoop. Nor is it fully realized how many words and phrases used every day in the United States are

unknown, or nearly so, in Britain, and show no sign of being adopted here. Many, but not all, are colloquial, e. g. realtor (estate agent), rotunda (concourse), running gear (vehicle's wheels and axles), sassy (cheeky), scam (fraud), scofflaw (habitual law-breaker), to second-guess (be wise after the event), tacky (seedy, tatty). Many words have slightly different meanings in the United States, e. g. jelly (jam), mean (nasty, not stingy), nervy (impudent, not nervous). Some familiar words have a slightly different form, e. g. behoove, crawfish, dollhouse, math, normalcy, rowboat, sanitarium (British sanatorium), tidbit. There are some notable differences between American and British grammar and construction, e. g. aside from (apart from), back of (behind), different than, in school, most (almost), protest (protest against), some (to some extent), through (up to and including); he ordered them arrested, I just ate (I have just eaten), to teach school, on the street, a quarter of ten.

While, therefore, the formal and literary varieties of British and American English are mutually intelligible, the most colloquial spoken varieties of each are in some ways very different, and each can, in some contexts, be almost incomprehensible to a speaker of the other.

C.2 2. Canada

Canadian English is subject to the conflicting influences of British and American English. On the whole British English has a literary influence, while American has a spoken one. The Canadian accent is in most respects identical with General American. But where British English has four vowels in (i) bat, (ii) dance, father, (iii) hot, long, (iv) law, and General American three, Canadian has only two: bat and dance with a front a, and father, hot, long, and law with a back ah-sound. Peculiar to the Canadian accent is a distinction between two varieties of the I-sound and two of the ow-sound: light does not have the same vowel as lied, nor lout as loud. Canadians pronounce some words in the American way, e. g. dance, half, clerk, tomato, but others in the British way, e. g. lever, ration, process, lieutenant, and the name of the letter Z. Some American spellings have caught on, e. g. honor, jail, plow, program, tire, but many, such as -er in words like center, single I in traveled, jeweler, and the short ax, catalog, check, have not. In vocabulary there is much US.

influence: Canadians use billboard, gas, truck, wrench rather than hoarding, petrol, lorry, spanner; but on the other hand, they agree with the British in using blinds, braces, porridge, tap, rather than shades, suspenders, oatmeal, faucet. The Canadian vocabulary, like the American, reflects the contact between English and various American Indian peoples, e. g. pekan (a kind of weasel), sagamite (broth or porridge), saskatoon (a kind of bush, or its berry). It also reflects close contact with the large French-speaking community of Canada and with Eskimo peoples, e. g. aboiteau (dike), inconnu (a kind of fish), to mush (travel by dog-sled); chimo (an Eskimo greeting), kuletuk (a garment resembling a parka). And as there have been different degrees of settlement by the various non— English-speaking European nationalities in Canada than in the United States, so the range of European loan-words in Canadian English is markedly different, many American colloquialisms being unknown. On the other hand, there are several regional dialects that differ markedly from the standard language, notably that of Newfoundland.

C.3 3. Australia and New Zealand

There are no important differences in written form between the English of Great Britain and that of Australia, New Zealand, or indeed South Africa. The literary language of the four communities is virtually identical. Grammatically, too, the English of all four is uniform, except that each has developed its own colloquial idioms. Thus it is in the everyday spoken language that the main differences lie. The Australian accent is marked by a number of divergences from the British. (i) The vowels of fleece, face, price, goose, goat, and mouth all begin with rather open, slack sounds not unlike those used in Cockney speech. (ii) The vowels of dress, strut, start, dance, nurse have a much closer, tighter, more fronted sound than in RP. (iii) In unstressed syllables, typically -es or -ed (boxes, studded), where RP would have a sound like i in pin, Australian English has a sound like e in open or a in comma. (iv) In unstressed syllables, typically -y, or -ie + consonant (study, studied), where

RP has the sound of *i* in *pin*, Australian English has a close *-ee* sound, as in *tree*. The result of (iii) and (iv) is that in Australia *boxes* and *boxers* sound the same, but *studded* and *studied*, which are the same in RP, sound different. (v) *-t-* between vowels, and *l*, are often sounded rather as they are in American English. A number of individual words are differently pronounced, e. g. *aquatic* and *auction* with an *o* sound as in *hot* in the stressed syllable; *Melbourne* with a totally obscured second syllable, but *Queensland* with a fully pronounced one (the reverse of the RP). Australian vocabulary reflects, of course, the very different nature of the landscape, climate, natural history, and way of life. Familiar English words like *brook*, *dale*, *field*, and *forest* are unusual, whereas *bush*, *creek*, *paddock*, and *scrub* are normal. There are of course a large number of terms (often compounded from English elements) for the plants and animals peculiar to the country, e. g. *blue gum*, *stringybark* (plants), *flathead*, *popeye mullet* (fish). The borrowings from Aboriginal languages hardly need extensive illustration; many are familiar in Britain, e. g. *billabong*, *boomerang*, *budgerigar*, *didgeridoo*, *wallaby*. Many of them have taken on transferred meanings and have lost their Aboriginal associations, e. g. *gibber* (boulder, stone), *mulga* (an inhospitable region), *warrigal* (wild, untamed person or animal). But above all it is in the colloquial language that Australian English differs from British. Not only are there terms relating to Australian life and society, e. g. *jackaroo*, *rouse-about*, *walkabout*, but ordinary terms, e. g. *to chack* (tease), *crook* (bad, irritable, ill), *dinkum*, *furphy* (rumour), *to smodge* (fawn, caress); formations and compounds like those ending in *-o* (e. g. *arvo* (afternoon), *Commo* (communist), *smoko* (teabreak)); *to overland*, *ratbag* (eccentric, troublemaker), *ropeable* (angry); and expressions like *come the raw prawn*, *she'll be right*, *have a shingle short*. While it is true that many Australianisms are known in Britain, and form the basis of various kinds of humorous entertainment, and while British English has borrowed some Australian vocabulary (e. g. the verb *to barrack* or the noun *walkabout*), there is yet a wide gap between the popular spoken forms of the two kinds of English.

The gap is less wide in the case of New Zealand English, where British influence has on the whole remained stronger. To a British ear, the New Zealand accent is hardly distinguishable from the Australian. Its main peculiarities are: (i) *i* as in *kit* is a very slack sound almost like *a* in *cadet*; (ii) *a* as in *trap* and *e* as in *dress* are almost like British *e* in *pep* and *i* in *this*; (iii) the vowels of *square* and *near* are very tense and close, and may even be sounded alike; (iv) the vowels of *smooth* and *nurse* are sounded forward in the mouth, and rather close. The chief differences between New Zealand and Australian English are lexical. The words of aboriginal origin are mostly unknown in New Zealand, while the New Zealand words drawn from Maori are unknown in Australia. Many of the latter, naturally, refer to natural history and landscape specific to the country, e. g. *bid-a-bid* (kind of plant), *cockabully*, *tarakihi* (kinds of fish), *pohutukawa* (kind of tree). There is a large everyday vocabulary, much of it, but by no means all, colloquial or slang, used neither in Britain nor in Australia, e. g. *booy* (remote rural district), *greenstone* (stone used for ornaments), *return to the mat* (resume Maori way of life), *shake* (earthquake), *tar-sealed* (surfaced with tar macadam), *Taranaki gate* (gate made of wire strands attached to upright battens). While a fair amount of colloquial vocabulary is shared by Australia and New Zealand (e. g. *sheila*, *Pommy*, *paddock* (field), *shout* (to treat to drinks)), there are important nuances. In both *to bach* is to live as a bachelor, but in New Zealand only is there a noun *bach*, a small beach or holiday house. Similar organizations are the RSA (Returned Servicemen's Association) in New Zealand, but the RSL (Returned Servicemen's League) in Australia: the initials of the one would be meaningless to a member of the other. *Mopoke* or *morepork* is the name for a kind of owl in New Zealand, but for either a *nighthawk*, or a different kind of owl, in Australia.

C.4 4. South Africa

English is one of the two official languages of the Republic of South Africa, the other being Afrikaans (derived from Dutch, but now an entirely independent language). Afrikaans has had a fairly strong influence on the English of the Republic: the South African accent is distinctly "clipped"; *r* is often rolled, and the consonants *p*, *t*, and *k* have a sharper articulation, usually lacking the aspiration (a faint *h* sound) found in other varieties of

English. I is sometimes very lax (like a in along), e. g. in bit, lip, at other times very tense (like ee), e. g. in kiss, big; the vowels of dress, trap, square, nurse are very tense and close, while that of part is very far back almost like port. As in the other forms of English of the Southern Hemisphere, the different landscape, flora and fauna, and way of life are reflected in the South African vocabulary, e. g. dorp (village), go-away bird, kopje, nartjie (tangerine), rand, rhenosterbos (a kind of plant), roman, snoek (both fish), springbok, stoep (veranda), veld. There are many loan-words from Afrikaans and African languages, e. g. (besides most of those above) braai (barbecue), donga (eroded watercourse), erf (building plot), gogga (insect), impala (kind of antelope), indaba (meeting for discussion), lekker (nice), rondavel (hut).

There are also many general colloquial words and phrases, e. g. the farm (the country), homeboy (African from one's own area), location (Black township), robot (traffic light), tackies (plimsolls). Some of these reflect the influence of Afrikaans idiom, e. g. to come there (arrive), just now (in a little while), land (a field), to wait on (wait for). Only a few words have entered the main stream of English, but they are important ones, including apartheid, commandeer, commando, laager, trek, and the slang scoff (to eat; food).

The spoken language of each of the main English-speaking communities, as well as of the smaller communities scattered around the world, manifests enormous differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and idiom. The relative uniformity of the written, and especially the literary, language, stands in tension with this. The outcome is a world language of unparalleled richness and variety.