Why use a dictionary?
HOW TO MASTER A WORD WITH A DICTIONARY!

- The easiest and best way to master a word is to learn all that one possibly can about it; the more you know about a word, the more interesting and vivid it becomes...

  ...and so learning a word becomes a cycle - the more interesting it is for you, the more meaningfully you can relate it to other words and experiences,

  ...and the better it will be remembered.
Yet, when you are reading and come across an unknown word, the last resort is to use the dictionary!!

Stopping in the middle of a paragraph breaks your concentration, so before looking up a word, try to use context clues, or figure out the meaning of the word’s roots.

An excellent vocabulary study tip: “Mark unknown words with a dot in the margin, THEN, when you have finished reading, look the words up in the dictionary.”
The Entry

- The heart of the dictionary is the entry where important facts about a word are shown.

- What information can you expect to find?

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Information you can gather:

1. The standard **spelling** of the entry word (or words) and any variations, and its **syllabification**.

   **re·trieve**

   Syllables are indicated by centered dots or spaces in the entry words in most dictionaries.

2. The **pronunciation**: phonetic spelling &

3. part of speech

   /rɪˈtrɪv/ [ri-treev] verb, -trieved, -triev·ing,
An Entry:

**cas si mere** (kase-mer, kash-meer, kazh-meer), n. [<Kasmir; cf. Cashmere (wool) 1815–25; named after Cashmer], a thin twilled woolen cloth, used for men’s suits: also spelled casimere, casimire

- 1. spelling and syllabication
- 2. pronunciation
- 3. part of speech
- 4. etymology
- 5. definition
- 6. derivatives
Stress and diacritical marks

Example:  ap_pre_ci_a_tion
          (ə - prē ’ shē - ā ’ shən)

1. A heavy accent mark (’’) indicates primary stress and a lighter mark (’’) indicates secondary stress.
2. Syllables with no accent marks receive no stress.
The dictionary identifies parts of speech using common abbreviations:

- n. noun
- adj. adjectives
- pro. pronoun
- prep. preposition
- v. verb
- adv. adverb
- v.i. intransitive verb
- v.t. transitive verb
- conj. conjunction
- interj. interjection
Key words

- All dictionaries provide a special key to pronunciation in a place where it can be found easily, usually on the inside of the front cover or near it.

- They also reprint part of the key at the bottom of every other page throughout the books so that you can refer to it quickly.
Inflected Forms

The inflected forms are given right after the part of speech label.

- child – children
- bring – brought
- hoof – hooves
- begin – began

- little, less, least
- well, better, best

- The **forms a word takes** when it has undergone certain **grammatical changes**;
  - nouns from singular to plural,
  - changes in verb tense, and
  - changes in the adjective and adverb
Special ways in which some words are used by attaching labels: status labels, regional labels, or subject labels.

**Status Labels** - current use of the word
- Obsolete – words no longer in use
- Archaic – words still in use but rarely used
- Colloquial – words not normally used in formal communication
- Slang – words used very informally and are often considered to be nonstandard

Understanding these labels, makes learning words far more interesting!
Status Labels

**Regional Labels** — this label implies that the word is used chiefly in a certain part of the world or country. The label may appear simply as dialect, or it may name the area such as British.

**Subject Labels** — these labels name the special field or subject in which a word has a particular meaning, as in astronomy, or physics, or religion.

- Labeling is not uniform among dictionaries and is considered the editor’s opinion.
ETYMOLOGY is the origin and development of a word.

Dictionaries give some of this information in very brief form in the part of the entry which is enclosed within brackets.

Retrieve [1375–1425; late ME retreven < MF retroev-, retreuv-, tonic s. of retrouver to find again, equiv. to re- re- + trouver to find; see trover]

The ETYMOLOGY will tell:
- What time period the word first appeared in English
- What it meant and how it was spelled
- What other languages it appeared in at that time
- What languages it came from
The word chocolate was derived from Spanish which came from the Aztec word xocolatl, which meant *bitter water*. So, chocolate, a favorite treat of many, actually had roots in the Americas before Columbus made his voyage in 1492.

Knowing the background of this word certainly helps you form a visual image of its beginnings.
SYNONYMS AND ANTONYMS

Synonyms are found usually at the end of a word entry, often with an explanation of the precise differences in meaning between the synonyms and the word being defined.

- **SYN**. Is the abbreviation for synonym. A synonym is a word that has similar meaning as the entry word: naïve gullible inexperienced

- **ANT** is the abbreviation for antonym. When an antonym is given in a dictionary, it is found after the synonym. naïve experienced astute
An entry may be followed by a run-on entry, which is a word derived from the preceding word but so closely related that no definition is given.

Retrieves:

- **re·triev·a·ble, adj**
- **re·triev·a·bil·i·ty, n**
- **non·re·triev·a·ble, adj**
- **un·re·triev·a·ble, adj**
- **un·re·trieved, adj**
As you continue to work on expanding vocabulary skills, you’ll begin to notice that many English words have their origins from names of characters in Greek mythology or from prominent people in world history.
Go to a dictionary and look up the key words. Then answer the questions that follow.

- **Maverick** – John McCain is often called a maverick. Why?
- **Boycott** – President George W. Bush called for a boycott of merchandise that could be sold to Iran? Why?
- **Odyssey** – Senator Obama’s trip to the Middle East has been referred to as an odyssey. Why?
- **Guillotine** – who invented this device? What was it used for and when?
Take a Trip:  
HERE’S SOMETHING TO DO!

Let’s visit the Wilton website.
This site gives a clear description of how the English language developed. At the bottom of his main page he presents several words with a hotlink to the words’ etymology. Look at a few of these to get a better understanding of how words originated.

Go to:  http://www.word origins.org

Be aware, the words he has chosen are both formal and informal in nature. For class purposes, we are interested in academic, formal words.
Now, do this:

On a separate paper, write 5 words you found intriguing from the Wilton website:

1. Write their definition and part of speech
2. Where did each word come from?
3. Use them in a sentence.
4. Explain: why did you select these 5 words.

Share your work with the lab instructor.
Quick Review

Below is an example of an entry from the dictionary. Can you identify the sections of the entry?

en· tire (en· ti· r′) adj. 1. Having no part left out: WHOLE 2. Being without limitations or reservation: COMPLETE 3. OBS. An ungelded animal, esp. a stallion. [ME entere′ < MF entire < L integrun] SYN. 1. see complete. —ANT. 1. partial
Don’t be afraid to explore!

Your search to expand your vocabulary is only the beginning. By the end of the semester, you will become a “mini-expert” in each of your classes by learning the very specialized terminology for those disciplines.

Use the vocabulary system, underline/highlight unfamiliar words as you read, then research them in a dictionary to get a more accurate definition and understanding.