

Getting started with the **Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online**

Access to OED Online

Access to OED Online requires a username and password. Further information is available on a separate information sheet or from any staff member at The British Council Information Centre.

What is OED Online?

OED Online is the searchable online version of the Oxford English Dictionary, the world's leading authority on the history and development of the English language since 1150. It offers unparalleled access to the complete text of the 20-volume second edition and the three Additions Series volumes, together with at least 1,800 new and revised entries each quarter.

So much more than a dictionary...

The OED online isn't just another dictionary. You can search on words, definitions, etymology and quotations. You can look up the meanings of a word and trace its development, to investigate word formation in English and to discover the contributions that particular writers have made to the development of new words and meanings.

- Search the equivalent of 23 printed volumes of information with speed and ease.
- Everything from simple word look-ups to complex, powerful advanced searching.
- Display entries according to your needs – for the first time you can turn pronunciation, etymologies, variant spellings and quotations on and off.
- Entries can be bookmarked and returned to at a later date.
- Using mail facility enables you to email a page from the dictionary. Links allow free access for three days so this is ideal for sharing information.
- Look up when words and meanings were first used.
- Follow up cross references instantly.
- Find out the etymological source of a word.
- Find a term when you know the meaning but have forgotten the word.
- Search for quotations from a specified year.
- Search for all quotations from a practical author and/or work.
- Quotation author search to find out how many times an author is cited.

- Quotation work search to whether quality newspapers are cited more than popular ones
- Find out the definitions of over 600,000 words
- Trace the usage of words from their first recorded occurrence to the modern periods 2.5 million quotations

Three ways to search OED Online

- Find Word
- Simple Search
- Advanced Search

The 'Find Word' search



This search option allows you to find the simple definition of a word or phrase. This option searches OED main entries only.

Simple Search

SIMPLE SEARCH

Click **Simple Search** to perform a full text search in more detail.



Instead of searching the full text, click here if you want to limit your search to fields such as:

- first cited date/author/work
- definitions
- etymologies
- language names
- quotations

Click on the **More Options** for more search choices such as adding another word within a certain proximity of your search term (1 word apart, 2 words apart, 5 words or less, 10 words or less).

Advanced searching

ADVANCED SEARCH

This offers full text searching of the entire dictionary text with additional options and greater flexibility. Click on **Advanced Search** at the bottom-left of the screen. Choose from the tabs whether you want to retrieve **Entries** or **Quotations**. The currently selected tab appears in red.

- Choosing **Entries** means that the results will consist of entries containing the term(s).
- Choosing **Quotations** means that the results will consist of quotations containing the term(s).

Advanced searching is best when you are trying to find very specific information about a word, or when you want use the powerful and flexible **Advanced Search** form to find words from a particular set of search criteria.

For example, you may be interested to find out: *“Which nouns, derived from Hebrew, entered the English language between 1800 and 200, and relate to food?”* You could then set up the search form to effectively ask this question (the word *Kosher* would appear in the results list for such a search).

- You can use Boolean searching to search for multiple terms in specific sections of the OED (see below).
- You can perform case-sensitive searches or exact character searches.
- You can perform a search within a previous search.
- You can restrict a search to find results within a particular part of speech.
- You can search for a term within a certain proximity to another word.

Tips for searching

Wildcard characters may be used to replace characters within words and at the end of words.

- Use ***** to replace more than one character:
oper* finds opera, operate, operetta.
c*t finds cat, caught, commencement, etc
- Use **?** to replace one character:
ban? finds band, bane, bank.
min??? finds all 6 letter words starting with min, such as minute, minder, mincer, etc.

Combining searches using Boolean operators

- **AND** - Using AND between search terms finds entries or quotations containing both terms.
- **OR** - Using OR between search terms finds entries or quotations containing either of the terms.
- **AND NOT** - Using AND NOT between search terms finds entries or quotations containing the first term but not the second.

- **NEAR** - Using NEAR between search terms finds entries or quotations containing the first term within a certain number of words of the second, or both terms anywhere in the same entry section.
- **NOT NEAR** - Using NOT NEAR between search terms finds entries or quotations in which the first term occurs, and in which the second term does not occur within a certain number of words of the first.

Viewing search results

Only exact matches to your word are displayed. You can click on **Entry Name** to list results alphabetically by name, or you can click on **Entry Date** to list results chronologically by date.

LIST BY: ENTRY NAME ENTRY DATE QUOTATION DATE		
1	c950	angel, n. X to translate Heb. mal'ak, in full.
2	c950	bless, v.1 n to translate Heb. brk, primarily
3	1891	hametz [Heb. hames.]

Click on the underlined blue text of a word to view the result. To view additional information about the word, there are buttons for each of the following:

- **Pronunciation** – how the word is pronounced
- **Spelling** – historical and alternative spellings
- **Etymology** – linguistic origins of the word
- **Quotations** – dated examples from literary works of how the word has been used in context
- **Date Chart** - displays a timeline and the dates of the accompanying quotations.

Printing **PRINT**

Click the **Print** button at the bottom-right of the screen. This will open another browser window that shows a preview of the information you are about to print. Click **File** at the top of the browser window. Then click **Print** and follow the on-screen directions.

Emailing **MAIL**

You can email a link to a dictionary entry by clicking on the mail button at the bottom-right of the screen. This will bring up another browser window. Enter the email address that you want to send the link and then click **Mail**. You will receive a notice that the email has been sent. The email will provide a link to the entry in the OED for the next three days for free.

Saving

To save an entry you must first click on the **Print** button at the bottom-right of the screen. This will open another browser window that shows a preview of the information you are about to save to file. Click **File** at the top of the browser window. Then click **Save As** and follow the on-screen directions.

Help **HELP**

Click on **Help** on the bottom-right of the screen. You can either search for a help topic or find it via the **Help Text Index**. A linked list of contents is always displayed on the right-hand side of the help pages, and at the bottom are links to the index.