

Vocabulary Word of the Day

by Marcia Miller and Martin Lee

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**180 Wonderful Words With Quick & Creative Writing
Activities That Expand Kids' Vocabularies,
Enrich Writing & Boost Test Scores**

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To Eugene, who loves words



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Dear Teacher,

You use many methods to help your students acquire new vocabulary. Perhaps the best approach is to introduce words in the authentic context of what students read and hear. But sometimes, the pure whimsy, music, or rhythm of a new word may grab students. Some new words give them more precise or colorful ways to express their ideas. Some are unusual in their derivation, pronunciation, or appearance. And some are just plain fun to know and use. These notions prompted us to create this book.

From the broad universe of common English words, we selected 180. Of these, 112 have been given the “full treatment”—a model sentence, a user-friendly definition, and either synonyms, antonyms, or interesting background information about the word. Then comes WordWork—a brief activity designed to help students master new words through writing, speaking, drawing, acting out definitions, and more. These activities invite students to work individually or in small groups, using different learning modalities.

This book is designed to help students make connections and synthesize new words into their own speaking and writing. We believe that as students explore and analyze words, their higher-level thinking skills will grow along with their working vocabulary. Knowing more words and learning how to use them may ultimately help students perform better on standardized tests. We also hope that this book will help kids embrace the pure joy of language.

Each fully treated word is presented in a “quartet” of four words that share some common link—and the link itself may be whimsical. You can use the words one at a time or as a group. As for the other 68 words, most appear in a recurring feature we call “In a Word.” About two-thirds of the word quartets are followed by an “In a Word” reproducible that introduces at least one word linked to one or more of the words in the quartet. These invite students to think, write, or draw as they learn about etymology, word play, classification, or usage.

The book ends with a comprehensive word list, in alphabetical order, of all words presented. You can seek out particular words by starting there.

We hope this book supports your efforts to bring words to life in your classroom, and that it will entice students to acquire and embrace vivid vocabulary.

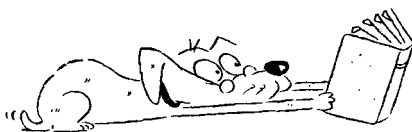
Best regards,

Marcia Miller & Marty Lee

Teacher Tips

Use the words in any way that suits your teaching style, classroom goals, and students' skill levels and learning styles. Here are some suggestions:

-  Preview each quartet of words to determine whether you want to present words one at a time, more than one at a time, or as a complete foursome.
-  Present words daily or, as a set, weekly. Start class with one of the words. Print a page, cut it in half, and post the word and its treatment. (You may wish to enlarge the page for greater visibility.) Post words in the same spot each day, perhaps within a frame, to accustom students to this activity. As you complete each word, store it alphabetically in a file box or accordion file.
-  Invite students to do the WordWork as a warm-up, as a concluding activity, as homework, as extra credit, as a performance assessment for their portfolios, or as a challenge just for fun!
-  Let the "In a Word" features stimulate research, brainstorming, written and oral expression, or role-playing.
-  Encourage students to keep individualized



vocabulary journals that they can add to as they read, listen, write, or research. You might have them apply some of the WordWork techniques to internalize their newly acquired words.

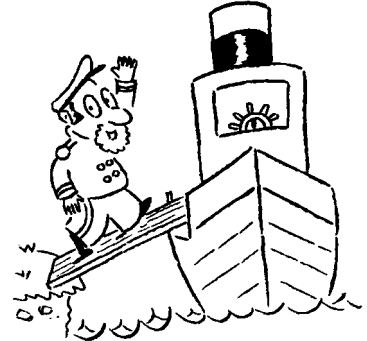
-  From time to time, invite students to present new vocabulary of their own choosing. The words they offer may come from their reading, from current events, or from a random browsing through the dictionary. They can also be offshoots of the word groupings in this book. For an extra challenge, have students formulate a model sentence, a user-friendly definition, and WordWork idea to support each new word.
-  Finally, take a tip from the old TV comedy quiz show *You Bet Your Life*. On that show, host Groucho Marx chose a new secret word each day. If a contestant happened to use that word in the course of conversation, bells rang, a rubber duck dropped from the ceiling, and the contestant won a prize. Try a similar gimmick with words in this book. Be sure not to display the word until class ends or a student uses it!

Words for START and STOP

embark (verb)

*Dorothy and Toto **embark** on a journey to find the Wizard.*

Embark means to begin a trip or a journey, often on a ship, a train, or a plane.



Synonyms

start off, launch, set out

WordWork

Think about what it would be like to **embark** on a trip around the world. Then copy and complete the following sentence:

*Before I **embark** on my trip to [destination], I will...*

Bon voyage!

bolt (verb)

*When the starting bell rings, the racehorses **bolt** from the gate.*

Bolt means to run away suddenly or to dash off quickly.

Synonyms

sprint, take flight, dart, rush

WordWork

There are different reasons to **bolt**. Complete the three-column chart to describe situations in which someone or something would **bolt**.

Bolt in fear	Bolt in excitement	Bolt for other reasons

Words for START and STOP

cease (verb)

"Cease that drumming, Steve, or you'll wake the baby," Dad warned.

Cease means to put an end to or to stop—right now!

Antonyms

commence, initiate

WordWork

Suppose you wanted to get someone to **cease** doing something—right now! What might you say to the person? List five different words or expressions that might do the trick.

procrastinate (verb)

*If you **procrastinate** any longer, you'll miss the school bus.*

To **procrastinate** is to delay or put off doing something you know you should do simply because you don't want to do it.

Did You Know?

Procrastinate comes from the Latin *pro*, which means toward or forward, and *cras*, which means tomorrow. If you **procrastinate**, you push something ahead toward tomorrow.

WordWork

Think about times lately when you have procrastinated. Did your procrastination result in your missing something? Write a letter to Father Time. Tell why you procrastinated and what happened.



IN A WORD

Do you remember being an **abecedarian**?

By now, you surely know the alphabet. But before you did, you were a beginner—an **abecedarian**. This word comes from the first four letters of the English alphabet. Do you see how?



Beginning students or new learners are abecedarians, even if they are learning something besides the ABC's! In what areas, subjects, or activities are you an **abecedarian** today?

If the word **abecedarian** is in your dictionary, you'll find it near the start of the A words. Guess five other words that you'd expect to find near the start of the A words. Then guess five words you'd expect to be at the beginning of the B section, such as *baby* or *babble*. Check to see how you did! Then repeat for C, D, and for other letters of the alphabet.

A _____

B _____

C _____

D _____

Words for BEGINNERS & OLD PROS

novice (noun)

*Sara is a **novice** on skates, so it's a challenge for her just to start and stop!*

A **novice** is a beginner, someone who's not very experienced or is new to something. A **novice** has few skills.

Did You Know?

The word **novice** comes from the same Latin root as the words *novel*, which means new (as in "a novel idea"), and *novelty*, which means something new and unusual.

WordWork

Think back to a time when you were a **novice** at something. What was it? Who or what helped you get started? How did you feel? Are you still a **novice**? If so, write to explain why. If not, write about how you have improved your skills.

apprentice (noun)

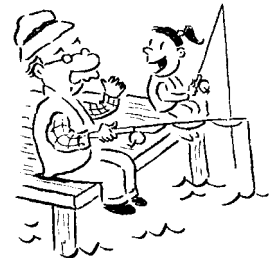
*The **apprentice** is still learning, so the master supervises her at all times.*

An **apprentice** is someone who learns a craft, an art, or a trade by working for someone who is already skilled.

Did You Know?

In a famous cartoon by Walt Disney, Mickey Mouse® is an **apprentice** to a wizard and makes errors that cause chaos!

Mickey Mouse® is a registered trademark of the Walt Disney Company.



WordWork

Even if you're not an official **apprentice**, you have probably learned many things by working with or watching someone with more experience. List five things you learned with the help of others. In what kinds of jobs or hobbies might you like to be an **apprentice**?

Words for BEGINNERS & OLD PROS

veteran (noun)

*My orthodontist is a **veteran** at helping kids get used to braces.*

A veteran is somebody who has a lot of experience in an activity or in a profession. Also, a veteran is someone who has served in a war.

Synonyms

pro, old-timer, old hand, elder

WordWork

Every November 11, Americans celebrate Veteran's Day. Whom does this holiday honor? Why? Write some questions you would like to ask a **veteran**.



sage (noun, adjective)

*They asked the **sage** for thoughts on how to handle the problem.*

A sage is a very wise person who may share his or her wisdom with others. Sage also means wise, solemn, or sound, and can describe ideas, thoughts, or judgment. A sage is likely to offer sage advice.

Synonyms

(adjective) astute, knowing, judicious, deep

WordWork

Who is the most **sage** person you know? Describe this person. Tell what makes him or her a **sage**. Then list three questions you might ask that person to benefit from his or her wisdom and judgment.

Great LITTLE Words

arc (noun)

*The path of the falling star made a silver **arc** in the sky.*

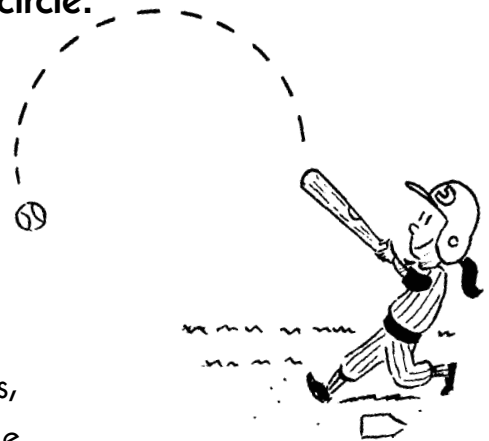
An **arc** is a curve. In math, an **arc** is part of a circle.

Did You Know?

Arc is related to the words *arcade*, *arch*, and *archery*. Use a dictionary to help you figure out why.

WordWork

Use your body to form arcs. Make arcs with your fingers, hands, arms, or back. Then look around the room. Name five things that have **arc** shapes.



coy (adjective)

*Flora acted **coy** about joining our club, but the more she saw what we do, the more she showed interest in becoming a member.*

Coy means shy, quiet, modest, or bashful. Someone who is **coy** may be pretending to be more reserved than he or she really is.

Synonyms

blushing, evasive, skittish

WordWork

Work with a partner or small group. Role-play a situation in which someone is **coy**. For instance, imagine pretending to feel unworthy of an honor, such as being named class artist, when you actually think you deserve it! Practice your skit and then present it to the class. Ask the audience which clues let them know who was **coy**.

Great LITTLE Words

orb (noun)

*The magician stared into a crystal **orb** and predicted the future.*

An orb is anything ball-shaped, like a globe, a planet, or an eye.

Did You Know?

The word *orbit* is related to **orb**.



WordWork

Identify ten orbs in our solar system. HINT: Don't forget moons!

irk (verb)

*It will really **irk** the coach if we show up late for soccer practice.*

To irk means to bother, annoy, irritate, or trouble someone.

Antonyms

charm, cheer, please

WordWork

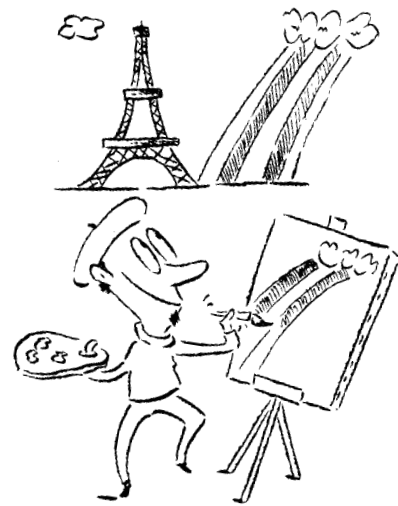
What things **irk** you? Does it **irk** you when people snap their gum? Does it **irk** you when commercials interrupt a TV show? Complete this statement in at least three different ways:

It really irks me when...

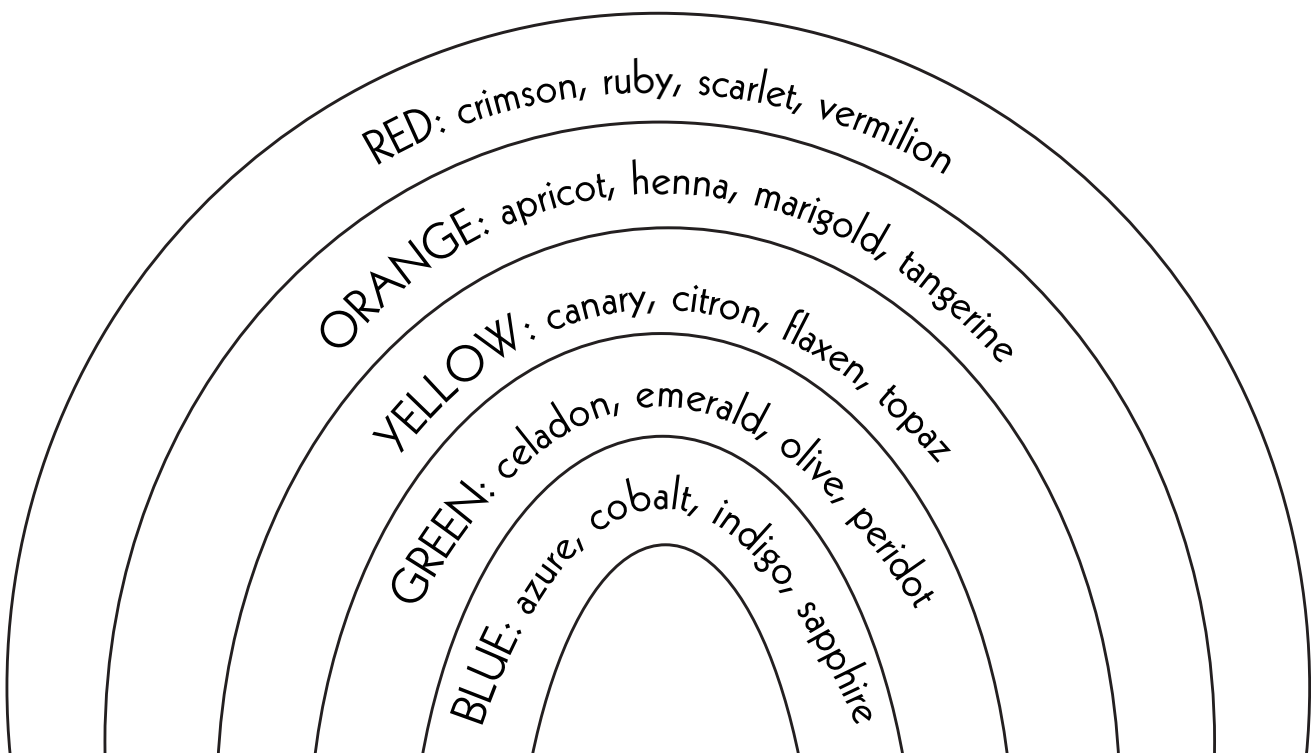
IN A WORD

More Than Your Ordinary Rainbow

The French word for *rainbow* is *arc-en-ciel*, or “arc in the sky.” Here are 20 words for some rainbow colors. The next time you describe something by color, use a more colorful term! Check out a large box of crayons or an art book to give you a better idea of these colors.



Color the rainbow to help you remember these new color words.



Words From OLD ICELANDIC

saga (noun)

*The **saga** of my family begins in Poland, where most of my ancestors were farmers.*

A **saga** is a long story that describes the adventures of heroes. The Old Icelandic sagas explained history, myths, legends, gods, and heroes. Nowadays, a **saga** is any long, involved story about a family or other group of people.

Did You Know?

The *Star Wars*® films present a visual **saga** about the future. Each movie adds details about the characters and extends the **saga**.

Star Wars® is a registered trademark of Lucasfilm Ltd.

WordWork

Write the **saga** of your family's history. Talk to family members for ideas. Look through photo albums, old letters, documents, maps, and other sources of information.

sleuth (noun)

*We need a **sleuth** as clever as Sherlock Holmes to solve this mystery.*

A **sleuth** is a detective, someone who is good at figuring out facts.

Did You Know?

In Old Icelandic, the word *slóth* meant trail. So a **sleuth** must be someone who is very good at following a trail.

WordWork

Brainstorm a list of sleuths you know from books, movies, comics, television, and real life. Talk about traits that all the sleuths have in common. How is sleuthing different today than it was in the days of Sherlock Holmes?



Words From OLD ICELANDIC

girth (noun)

*It takes nine people to surround the **girth** of that old oak tree.*

Girth is the measurement around the middle of something.

Did You Know?

Girth is related to the words *girdle* and *gird*. Have you ever heard the expression “to gird yourself” for something? How might this phrase relate to **girth**?



WordWork

Which tree near your school has the greatest **girth**? How can you describe or measure that **girth**? Compare its **girth** to that of General Sherman, a giant sequoia tree in California that measures more than 102 feet around (at 4½ feet off the ground).

ransack (verb)

*“Even if they **ransack** my castle, they’ll never find my gold,” said Erik.*

To **ransack** means to search a place thoroughly but wildly, looking for things. Someone who ransacks is usually in a hurry and leaves behind a mess.

Synonyms

comb, plunder, rummage

WordWork

Describe a time you ransacked a closet, drawer, cupboard, room, or trunk to find something. Did you find it? Did you find anything else? What condition was the place in when you finished?

Words With DOG and CAT

dogged (adjective)

Eli's *dogged* effort to learn to skate earned him scrapes and bruises, but he finally got the hang of it.

Dogged means stubborn, never giving up. Imagine a hunting dog following a trail wherever it leads.

Synonyms

persistent, determined

WordWork

Use **dogged** in a sentence that includes the word *cat* (or other animal). Be sure your sentence gets at the meaning of **dogged**.

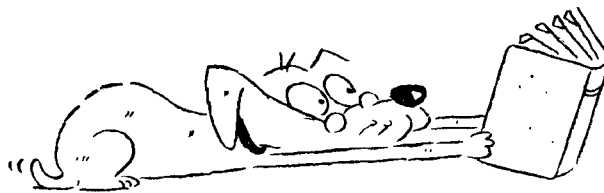
dog-eared (adjective)

We've read *Goodnight Moon* so many times that the pages are *dog-eared*.

Dog-eared means worn out or shabby from overuse. Dog-eared pages have often been bent down at the corners.

Synonyms

scruffy, tattered



WordWork

Make a list of the most **dog-eared** books you can find in your classroom, in the library, or at home. Propose some logical reasons that these books have gotten so much use.

Words With DOG and CAT

catty (adjective)

*When Kenji overheard the **catty** remarks, his feelings were hurt.*

Something that is catty is nasty or hurtful. Catty remarks can be cruel.

Synonyms

unkind, mean, upsetting

WordWork

Try to think of other words that begin with *cat-* or *dog-*. First brainstorm on your own or with a partner. Then look through a dictionary to see what's there.

caterwaul (verb)

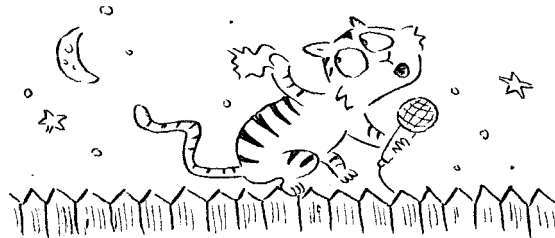
*Nobody could sleep when our Siamese decided to **caterwaul** all night.*

To caterwaul is to screech, wail, mewl, or howl like a cat.

Antonyms

purr, hum

WordWork



Have a caterwauling contest. Take turns trying to sound like a wailing cat. When you finish, write a description of the best caterwaulers. How did they sound? How did they make their sounds? How did they look? How did you feel listening to them?

Words ON THE GO

plod (verb)

*It's very tiring to **plod** through deep snow.*

When you plod, you move in a slow, heavy way.

When you plod along, you trudge, and may seem miserable or worn out. You can plod through a chore, too.



Did You Know?

When you **plod**, your feet can make a sound that suggests the meaning of the word itself. Try plodding along. What do you hear?

WordWork

A drama critic described the performance of a play as "plodding." What do you think the critic meant?

meander (verb)

*The cool autumn woods are so lovely, I could **meander** through them for hours.*

To meander means to wander idly with no destination in mind. Paths that meander wind and turn back and forth.

Did You Know?

The word **meander** comes from the Greek name for a winding river in western Turkey, now known as the Menderes. The Greeks called it *Maiandros*. Try to find this river on a map. How does it look?

WordWork

If you could **meander** wherever you wanted, where would you want to go? What would you bring with you? Whom would you want to join you? Write about this experience.

Words ON THE GO

lope (verb)

*I watched the coyote **lope** off into the hills.*

If you lope, you move along effortlessly, with long easy steps or a swinging stride. When you lope, your motions are smooth.

Did You Know?

The word **lope** is related to the word *leap*. Knowing this can help you imagine the verb *loping*—moving in a smooth, easy, leaping way.

WordWork

Use three “words on the go” to move across the room in different ways: *plod*, *meander*, and **lope**. List some adjectives that describe each kind of movement.

flit (verb)

*The cat stares through the window at the butterflies that **flit** about the garden.*

To flit means to flutter quickly from place to place or to move in a light, darting way. Creatures that flit don’t stay in one spot for long.

Antonyms

linger, lumber

WordWork

One way to remember the meaning of **flit** is to make up an acronym that uses its letters. For instance: Flies Lightly In Trees. Make up your own acronym for **flit**, or create one for another “word on the go.”

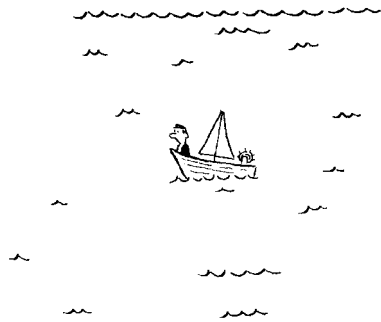


Big Words for LITTLE; Little Words for BIG

vast (adjective)

*The sailor looked out over the **vast** ocean, wondering if he'd see land again.*

Vast means huge in area or amount, or seemingly endless.



Synonyms

enormous, huge, immense, great

WordWork

Name some things that are **vast**. How do you feel when you are standing beside something **vast**?

ample (adjective)

*The football stadium has **ample** seating for thousands of sports fans.*

Ample means large, having plenty of space, or being enough. **Ample** also means abundant or roomy.

Antonyms

insufficient, meager, scarce, lacking

WordWork

Name some things you have in **ample** supply.

Big Words for LITTLE; Little Words for BIG

minuscule (adjective)

*A skin cell is so **minuscule** that you'd need a microscope to see one.*

Minuscule means extremely small, tiny, or barely visible.

Did You Know?

The word **minuscule** was first used as a noun to name a tiny form of medieval writing. *Minuscules* were developed to contrast with *uncials*, which were large, rounded Greek or Latin letters. Later, the word was used to describe anything that was small.



WordWork

A variation on the spelling of **minuscule** is *miniscule*. Think about words you know that begin with the prefix *mini-*, which means small. List as many as you can.

diminutive (adjective)

*People who like dollhouses appreciate the **diminutive** furniture and details.*

Diminutive means much smaller than ordinary, notably below the average or expected size.

Did You Know?

Words often have **diminutive** forms to signal a smaller version of the original. For instance, a booklet is a **diminutive** book.

WordWork

Some names have **diminutive** forms such as Will for William and Jenny for Jennifer. Can you think of other names with **diminutive** forms?

IN A WORD

What makes something **typical**?



Do you recall the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears? Papa Bear's bed was vast; Mama Bear's bed was minuscule, but Baby Bear's bed was "just right."

Typical is a word that means just right, average, normal, or to be expected. **Typical** also means that something represents a group or idea. A **typical** lunch might include a sandwich, something to drink, and something for dessert. A **typical** party might provide snacks, music, games, decorations, and favors.

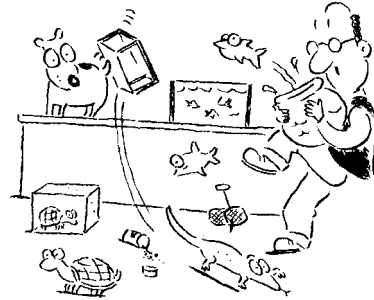
Imagine a **typical** school day. Draw, list, or describe what you'd expect to see, do, have, or find. Then imagine that everything went crazy—and atypical. Describe what might be different!

Words That START WITH M

mayhem (noun)

*In all the **mayhem**, some kids got separated from their partners.*

Mayhem is a situation of great confusion, disorder, trouble, or destruction.



Did You Know?

Mayhem also has a very specific legal meaning. **Mayhem** is the crime of damaging things or harming people on purpose.

WordWork

Imagine **mayhem** in a pet shop. What would you expect to see? To hear? To do? Draw or write a description.

malady (noun)

*Ted's **malady** causes a painful and itchy rash under his eyelids.*

A **malady** is a disease, illness, or other health disorder. A **malady** may be a one-time problem or a recurring condition.

Synonyms

sickness, ailment, infection

WordWork

What are some maladies you have experienced or have witnessed in others? Name three maladies, and give their symptoms and cures.

Words That START WITH M

monopolize (verb)

*Teachers try not to let any one student **monopolize** a class discussion.*

To monopolize means to get total control of or to dominate.

Synonyms

hog, corner, take over

WordWork

Have you ever played Monopoly®? If so, you know that the object of the game is to take over all the properties on the board. What do you do to attempt to **monopolize** the board? Explain. Or, if you don't know the game, interview someone who does. Write a brief summary of how players try to **monopolize** the board.

Monopoly® is a registered trademark of Hasbro, Inc.

mirth (noun)

*The clowns and puppets brought **mirth** to the celebration.*

Mirth means happiness and merry fun. Where there's mirth, you can expect laughter and joy.

Synonyms

delight, glee, hilarity, jollity

WordWork

Draw a face that shows **mirth**. Or make a collage of mirthful faces you cut out of old magazines and catalogs.



IN A WORD

Can you remember mnemonics?

Mnemonics (Nih-MOHN-ix) are tricks people use to help them remember. For example, to remember the order of colors in a rainbow, there's ROY G. BIV. It stands for red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet.

The word *mnemonic* comes from Greek mythology. Mnemosyne was the daughter of Heaven and Earth and the goddess of memory. She was the mother of the nine Muses, who spread the great deeds of the gods and inspired poets, writers, musicians, and dancers to create glorious works.

Mnemonics is the art or science of training the memory. What mnemonic tricks do you use to help you remember things?



Words for LAUGH and CRY

chortle (verb, noun)

*That joke was so funny that it made Inez **chortle**—nonstop—for two minutes!*

To chortle is to laugh or chuckle merrily. A chortle is a mix of a chuckle and a snort!

Did You Know?

Alice in Wonderland author Lewis Carroll invented the word **chortle**.

WordWork

Think about how it would sound to **chortle**. What people or characters do you know who **chortle**? What makes you **chortle**?

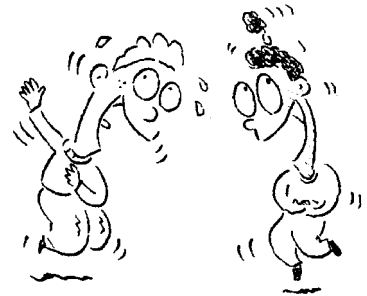
guffaw (noun, verb)

*When the team began to **guffaw**, the coach ran over to see what was going on.*

A guffaw is a loud outburst of coarse laughter. It can be mean-spirited or mocking. To guffaw is to laugh in this way.

Did You Know?

Word experts think that the word **guffaw** may be an imitation of the loud, blasting sound that this kind of laugh makes.



WordWork

There are many ways to laugh and many words to describe laughter. Give a **guffaw**. Try a **chortle**. Now demonstrate other kinds of laughs—snicker, cackle, giggle, or chuckle. If you aren't sure of the differences, check a dictionary—or ask a clown!

Words for LAUGH and CRY

whimper (verb, noun)

*The lonely puppy began to **whimper** as soon as we left the room.*

To whimper is to make weak, broken, sad crying noises. A whimper is a cry that sounds like that.

Synonyms

moan, snivel, sob, whine

WordWork

Many words for sounds begin with *wh-*. List at least five such words. Make the sound that each represents.



weep (verb)

*When they heard that Mittens had died, the whole family began to **weep**.*

To weep is to shed tears or to cry out of sadness, frustration, or rage.

Did You Know?

To **weep** is more than just to cry. Weeping expresses deep emotions. To **weep** is to bewail, grieve, lament, or mourn.

WordWork

Complete this statement to express the meaning of **weep**:

*Nola began to **weep** when....*

Words About CONFUSION

baffle (verb)

*The odd behavior of the bear **baffles** the park rangers, who wonder if the animal may be sick or injured.*



To baffle means to confuse or to puzzle, sometimes on purpose to block understanding. When one is baffled, that person is bewildered and confused and may not be able to continue.

Did You Know?

A **baffle** (as a noun) is a material, such as foam or insulation, used to deaden sound. Maybe the **baffle** confuses and blocks sound as it travels from place to place!

WordWork

Does anything about school **baffle** you? About friendship? About life?

nonplussed (adjective)

*Dad was so **nonplussed** by the new VCR that he gave up and asked Mom to set it for him.*

Nonplussed means totally puzzled. If you are nonplussed, you are unable to say or do anything further.

Synonyms

thwarted, frustrated, foiled, confounded

WordWork

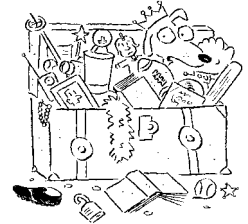
The word **nonplussed** is formed with the prefix *non-*, which means not, and the root word *plus*, which means more. In your own words, explain why **nonplussed** means what it means.

Words About CONFUSION

hodgepodge (noun)

*The box in the attic holds a **hodgepodge** of toys.*

A **hodgepodge** is a jumble, a mess, or a disorganized mix.



Did You Know?

There are different versions of the word **hodgepodge**, depending on where you live. In some regions, people say *hotchpotch*; others say *hotchpot*. Originally, it came from an Old French word for stew.

WordWork

Most people have a **hodgepodge** of something somewhere—in a “junk” drawer, in an old trunk, or in a storage shed. Describe a **hodgepodge** you know about. Where is it? What’s in it? How did it get that way? Who uses it? What surprises might be hidden in it?

flummoxed (adjective)

*Ben got so **flummoxed** by the surprise quiz, he just handed in a blank paper.*

Flummoxed means totally confused or puzzled.

Synonyms

bewildered, mystified, perplexed, stumped

WordWork

Word scholars think that **flummoxed** came from Old English slang. What slang words do you use to mean **flummoxed**, confused, or puzzled? List them.

IN A WORD

Animal Groups

Don't be flummoxed by the words below, all of which end with *-ine*. Each word describes a different kind of animal. Can you match them up?



Bovine means like a _____ .

bear

Canine means like a _____ .

cat

Equine means like a _____ .

cow

Feline means like a _____ .

dog

Lupine means like a _____ .

fox

Ovine means like a _____ .

horse

Porcine means like a _____ .

pig

Ursine means like a _____ .

sheep

Vulpine means like a _____ .

wolf

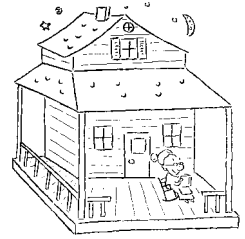
Answers: bovine—cow; canine—dog; equine—horse; feline—cat; lupine—wolf; ovine—sheep; porcine—pig; ursine—bear; vulpine—fox

Words From HINDI

veranda (noun)

*On clear nights, they sit on the **veranda** to watch the sunset.*

A veranda (or verandah) is an open porch, often with a roof, built along the side of a building. A veranda is a convenient place to get together that is outside but still attached to the house.



Did You Know?

There are lots of architectural terms to describe parts of houses like verandas. Ask an architect (or use a dictionary) to define *porch*, *portico*, *loggia*, *stoa*, and *piazza*.

WordWork

Make a model of a house that has a **veranda**. Invent some special features that would make it an enticing spot to relax.

pundit (noun)

*Ed is a construction **pundit**, so Lily listened carefully to his advice about how she might put a fence around her yard.*

A pundit is an authority or an expert on a subject. A pundit usually has lots of education, experience, or knowledge.

Did You Know?

Pundit sometimes appears as *pandit*. Both have the same meaning.

WordWork

Are you considered a **pundit** in any subject? Sports? Music? History? In what subject would you like to be considered a **pundit**?

Words From HINDI

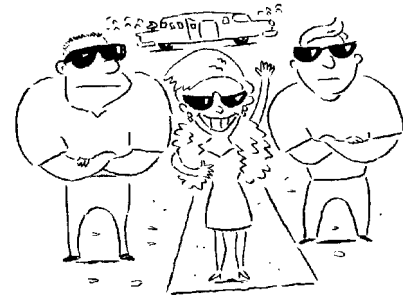
nabob (noun)

*When the **nabob** arrived, crowds pushed forward to see his fancy outfit, his glittering limousine, and his beefy bodyguards.*

A nabob is a person who is very wealthy or prominent. A nabob enjoys fame and riches, and acts very important.

Synonyms

personage, bigwig, celebrity, dignitary



WordWork

Brainstorm to list some fictional nabobs you know from movies, books, television, cartoons, or other sources. Pick one. Write a character sketch of this **nabob**. Include vivid descriptions of his or her clothing, home, and interests.

loot (verb)

*After the parade, some crooks tried to **loot** a computer store, but guard dogs scared them off.*

To loot means to steal from homes or stores, often during a chaotic situation. People who loot act wild, grabbing anything they can as fast as they can before getting caught.

Did You Know?

The noun **loot** refers to something of value. This word came later, after we already had the verb, to **loot**.

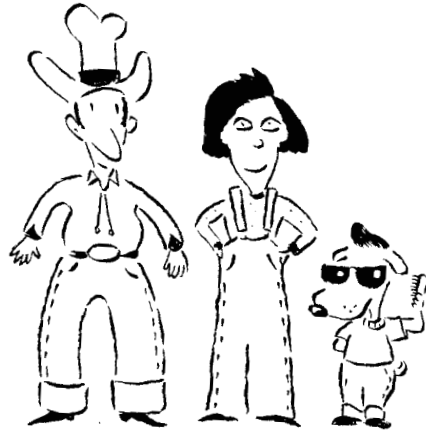
WordWork

Imagine that you are a detective who has just discovered a hiding place where robbers have stored their **loot**. What did you find?

IN A WORD

Do you wear
dungarees?

You may call them jeans, but years ago people called them **dungarees**. *Dungaree* is a Hindi word for a heavy cotton cloth, like blue denim, that was used to make sturdy pants and overalls in the 1830s. The work clothes made of this cloth came to be called **dungarees**.



Look around your classroom. How many students are wearing **dungarees**? How many have ever heard the word? Ask your parents, grandparents, or other older friends and relatives if they use the word **dungarees**.

What items are in style today that people in the future might no longer know about? What will they be wearing instead? Describe and then draw an outfit from the future.

Words for ORDINARY

middling (adjective)

*That painting is too **middling** to have much of a chance in the art show.*

Middling means ordinary, not special. Something **middling** fits right in the middle—not terrible, but not great either.

Synonyms

mediocre, medium, so-so, all right, passable

WordWork

Many expressions that mean **middling** are formed from two words. Two examples are *so-so* and *all right*. With a partner, consult a dictionary or thesaurus to find other two- or three-word expressions for **middling**.

bland (adjective)

*When Mona had a stomach virus, the doctor said to eat only **bland** foods.*

Bland means mild, soothing, and not irritating. Some people think bland foods are dull; others prefer **bland** foods because they are not too spicy, too salty, or too sharp to the taste.

Synonyms

boring, drab, flavorless, tame, watery

WordWork

Make a two-column chart. In one column, list some **bland** foods you like to eat. In the other column, list some foods that are the total opposite of **bland**—like jalapeño peppers!



Words for ORDINARY

routine (adjective)

*The dentist suggests a **routine** checkup every six months.*

Something that is routine is normal, commonplace, and not at all hard or unusual. A routine event is characterized by habit, rules, or a regular plan.

Did You Know?

The word **routine** is related to the word *route*. Both originally come from the Latin and Old French for *path*.

WordWork

Think of an ordinary, run-of-the-mill day. What are some of the **routine** things you normally do? What are some **routine** foods you eat, calls you make, and so on?

unassuming (adjective)

*Did you know that our **unassuming** neighbor was an astronaut?*

An unassuming person is modest, humble, down-to-earth, and does not put on airs.

Antonyms

forward, pretentious, conceited, pompous

WordWork

Some **unassuming** people might surprise you with the special things they can do or have done. Draw a two-panel cartoon about an **unassuming** person. In the first panel, make him or her look modest, humble, and down-to-earth. In the second panel, reveal the exciting secret or accomplishment that he or she never boasts about.



COMPOUND Words

deadpan (adjective)

*Nobody could tell from his **deadpan** voice how excited he really felt.*

Deadpan means not animated, blank, and without expression.

Did You Know?

The word *pan* has meant face for nearly 200 years; before that, it meant head or skull. *Dead* can mean expressionless. **Deadpan** has come to describe comedians who specialize in always keeping a straight face—while the audience howls with laughter!

WordWork

Keeping a **deadpan** face can be an effective skill. Think of actors, comedians, or people you know who can put on **deadpan** faces. Try one yourself. When does this work? Why is it useful? What is hard about it?

dovetail (verb)

*The seventh grade social studies unit on Ancient Greece **dovetails** with the school play, a Greek drama.*

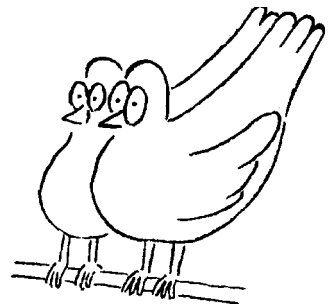
To **dovetail** means to fit or blend together perfectly, exactly, and in harmony.

Did You Know?

A **dovetail** is the name of a certain kind of woodworking joint. Check the corners of drawers for dovetails.

WordWork

Brainstorm with a partner to come up with other compound words that include animal names, but try for words that describe something else. Here are some words to get you started: *cowlick, ponytail, birdbrain, horseplay.*



COMPOUND Words

steadfast (adjective)

*A well-trained and experienced guide dog makes a **steadfast** companion.*

Steadfast means firm, steady, and unchanging. A person, thing, or idea can be steadfast—loyal, unwavering, and reliable.

Antonyms

disloyal, unreliable, wavering

WordWork

Read the fairy tale *The **Steadfast** Tin Soldier* by Hans Christian Andersen. (There are many versions available in most libraries.) Describe some qualities of the tin soldier that would prove that he was **steadfast**.

limelight (noun)

*Movie stars love the **limelight**, but too much public attention can upset or confuse someone who is not a celebrity.*

If you are in the limelight, you are the center of attention.

Did You Know?

Limelights were old but very bright theater lamps. These lamps, which burned a chemical called lime, lit up the actors onstage.



WordWork

Have you ever been in the **limelight**? How did you feel? If not, would you like to be? Make a list of pros and cons of being in the **limelight**.

IN A WORD

Did you know that your ZIP code is an **acronym**?



You probably know the numbers in your ZIP code. But did you know that the letters in ZIP form a special kind of word—an **acronym**? An **acronym** is a word made from the first letters (or syllables) of other words. The ZIP in ZIP code stands for Zone Improvement Plan. This plan of five-digit postal codes was introduced in July 1963 to help speed up mail sorting and delivery.

Have you heard of these acronyms? Check a dictionary to find out what words lent their initials or syllables to form each **acronym**.

scuba _____

radar _____

laser _____

NASA _____

UNICEF _____

Can you think of any other acronyms? If the letters in your name were an **acronym**, what would they stand for?

Words to CHEW ON

devour (verb)

*After a football game, the hungry players are ready to **devour** every piece of food put in front of them!*

To devour means to eat quickly, in a greedy way.

Did You Know?

Devour can also describe the action of taking in greedily with the mind or with another one of the senses. You might **devour** a terrific book or **devour** the sweet scent of lilacs.

WordWork

List some other words that go with the image of someone or something devouring food. For example, you might choose *slurp* or *gobble*. Then list some words that are the opposite of **devour**, such as *nibble* or *taste*.

masticate (verb)

*"It's rude to **masticate** with your mouth open," Dad reminded us.*

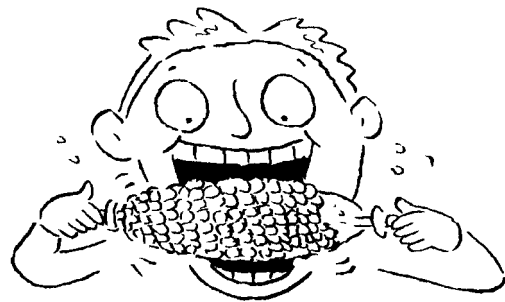
To masticate means to grind food down with the teeth. It's a fancy word for chew.

Synonyms

chomp, gnaw, grind, munch, ruminate

WordWork

What do you like to **masticate**? What are some things that are hard to **masticate**? Make a list.



Words to CHEW ON

repast (noun)

*To José, a birthday **repast** isn't complete without a cake and a song!*

Repast is a fancy word for a meal or the food eaten at the meal.

Synonyms

banquet, feast, spread

WordWork

What did you have for your morning **repast**? At last night's **repast**? Suppose you could have anything you wanted for this evening's **repast**. Plan the perfect menu.

victuals (noun)

*Roy cooks hearty **victuals** like beans, biscuits, and burgers.*

Victuals [VIT-uhls] is an old-fashioned word for food.



Did You Know?

In some southern and western regions of the United States, people spell the word **victuals** just as it sounds: vittles.

WordWork

What are some of your favorite **victuals**? Make a list. Describe how you like your **victuals** prepared. For instance, if you like corn, tell whether you like it on the cob, in corn relish, or in cream sauce.

IN A WORD

Want a sandwich?

British-born Jemmy Twitcher (1718–1792) so loved playing card games that he did not want to interrupt his fun even for meals. Fast food hadn't been invented yet, so he asked someone to bring him some cold roast beef wrapped in bread. He planned to hold the food in one hand and keep playing with the other—no need for silverware. Not a bad idea for the world's first official **sandwich**.



So why are these **victuals** called sandwiches? Jemmy Twitcher's full name was John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich!

Sandwich isn't the only *eponym* (a word named after a real person) you use. Use a dictionary to find out more about these names that became words:

boycott _____

leotard _____

diesel _____

saxophone _____

Invent a kind of food that would be named after you and draw a picture of it.

Verbs That End With **-ATE**

cogitate (verb)

*"I'm not sure yet," said Al. "Give me a few days to **cogitate**."*

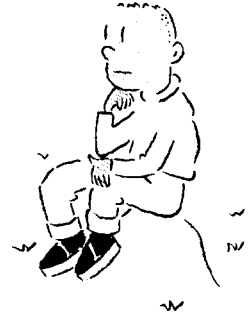
To **cogitate** means to think over clearly, to consider with care. When you **cogitate**, you take time to make the best decision.

Synonyms

meditate, muse, ponder, reflect

WordWork

Make an idea web that shows how you **cogitate** about a hard question, such as "Should we have year-round school?" or "Should I watch less TV?" Write the question in the center of the page and then write your ideas branching out from it.



negotiate (verb)

*They sat down together to **negotiate** a fair price for the dog-walking job.*

To **negotiate** is to bargain or talk until you reach an agreement. When people **negotiate**, they must give and take, and think hard to come up with a fair plan that satisfies all sides.

Did You Know?

The Latin roots of the word *negotium* combine *neg-* (not) and *otium* (easy). As any negotiator will tell you, it's not easy to **negotiate**.

WordWork

Daily life involves lots of negotiation. For instance, kids **negotiate** fair rules for games they make up. Work with a partner to role-play negotiating, and include some give-and-take.

Verbs That End With **-ATE**

reverberate (verb)

The lively march tunes **reverberate** among the office buildings as the parade passes through the business district.



To reverberate means to echo repeatedly or bounce back and forth.

Did You Know?

Electric guitar fans know about the reverb switch on the amp. It makes the guitar produce an echoing sound. That's because *reverb* is short for **reverberate**!

WordWork

Did you ever yell "HELLO!" just to hear your echo **reverberate**? Think about places where sounds **reverberate** well. If possible, go there and sing, whistle, clap, yell, or make another sound that reverberates.

hesitate (verb)

Roger prepares to dive, but **hesitates** as he recalls his last awful bellyflop.

To hesitate means to stop and wait for a moment, or to hold back. You might hesitate if you are unsure, unwilling, or afraid.

Synonyms

waver, pause, falter, delay

WordWork

Everyone hesitates sometimes. Complete these statements about a time when you hesitated before doing something.

I hesitated to _____.

That's because I _____.

As I hesitated, I thought about _____.

At last, I _____.

Words for FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

sneer (verb, noun)

The wrestlers **sneer** at each other across the ring before the match begins.

To **sneer** is to smile in a mean, mocking, or sarcastic way. A **sneer** is a smile that shows scorn or mocks or embarrasses someone.

Did You Know?

The word **sneer** can be traced back to an Old English word that meant to breathe heavily!

WordWork

Look into a mirror. Think about how you would feel if you wanted to mock someone with a false smile. Try to **sneer**. How does your **sneer** look? What does your face do? Write a description.

gape (verb)

Visitors to the Grand Canyon **gape** at how huge and awesome it is.

To **gape** means to stare with a wide-open mouth. You usually **gape** in surprise, shock, awe, or disbelief.

Did You Know?

You can use the word *gaping* to describe an enormous, yawning opening—much like the mouth of someone who gapes!

WordWork

Imagine opening a door and stopping to **gape** at what you see. What do you see? Draw a picture, write a story, or act out a scene that would cause you to **gape**.



Words for FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

glower (verb)

*Did you see Mr. Jones **glower** as our dog trampled his tomato plants?*

To glower is to give a hard, angry frown or stare. If you glower, you scowl fiercely. It's not a friendly way to look!

Antonyms

grin, laugh, smile

WordWork

Try out your acting skills. Work in a small group to practice glowering. Then practice other facial expressions, such as a gape, sneer, smirk, and so on, and see if other groups can guess which expression is which.

flabbergasted (adjective)

*We were **flabbergasted** by how expensive it was to call Japan.*

If you're flabbergasted, you are totally overcome with surprise. Your mouth might drop open, your eyes might bulge, and you might be left speechless.

Did You Know?

Word experts aren't really sure where the word **flabbergasted** came from. Some suggest that it may be a combination of *flabby* (as in your mouth hanging loose in shock!) and *aghast* (being taken aback).

WordWork

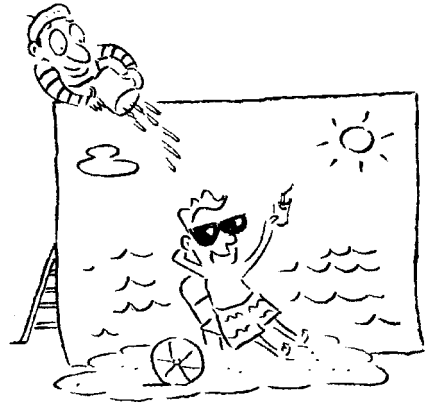
Think about a time when you were **flabbergasted**. What caused this feeling? What did you do? What did you say? How did you feel? Write about it.



IN A WORD

Is it just a **façade**?

The word **façade** comes from the Latin word for face. A **façade** is the front part of a building—or its face. Movie or stage scenery may be only façades. They don't have to last, and they can be moved easily. **Façade** has come to mean any outward appearance that has a sense of falseness to it, like a mask. If you look past the **façade**, you may discover that what's behind it is not what you expected.



If you had a **façade**, or false face, what would it be? When would you use it?
Describe a situation in which you had to put on a **façade**.

MORE Words ON THE GO

saunter (verb)

*After lunch, Gabe decided to **saunter** along the beach to enjoy the breeze.*

To saunter is to stroll or walk along in an aimless or casual way. When you saunter, you aren't in a hurry.

Antonyms

race, run, rush

WordWork

Write a brief story in which the main character saunters. Describe how the person moves, where he or she goes, and what he or she might think or see along the way.

clamber (verb)

*We had to **clamber** up the last 50 feet to reach the top of the mountain.*

To clamber is to climb awkwardly, using both the hands and feet. When you clamber, you scramble along with difficulty.

Synonyms

scale, mount, swarm

WordWork

Suppose you planned a hike or climb that you knew would require you to **clamber**. What gear might you want to have? Why?



MORE Words ON THE GO

slither (verb)

*To fit through the tunnel, you'll need to **slither** on your belly.*

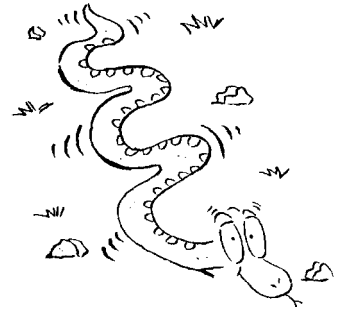
To slither is to slip and slide along the ground like a snake.

Synonyms

slink, glide

WordWork

What animals **slither**? Why would a person have to **slither** to move? Think of three tight spaces you might have to **slither** to get through.



galumph (verb)

*After building a snow fort, the boys **galumph** home for hot cocoa.*

To galumph is to march along in a heavy way, but with a clear sense of satisfaction.

Did You Know?

Lewis Carroll first used the word **galumph** in his famous nonsense poem "Jabberwocky." It's a blend of two words: *gallop* and *triumph*.

WordWork

Galumph across the room or around the playground. Be sure that the way you move gets across two ideas: clumsiness and delight.

Words That START WITH Q

qualm (noun)

Mom had qualms about sending Oliver to school with such a bad cough, even though he had no fever.

A qualm is a brief nagging doubt or hesitation. You get qualms when you wonder whether you're doing the right thing.

Synonyms

unease, worry, pang

WordWork

It is common to get qualms just before you do something. Complete each statement in two different ways:

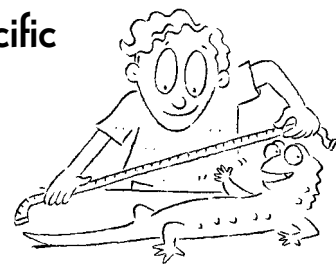
I had qualms of guilt when I...

I felt no qualms at all when I...

quantify (verb)

*We use units of measure called degrees to **quantify** the temperature.*

To quantify is to count, measure, or express a specific amount.



Synonyms

enumerate, compute, reckon

WordWork

Work with a partner to list units you could use to **quantify** each of the following ideas:

Length	Weight	Time	Money

Words That START WITH Q

query (noun)

The editor had a **query** for the author about her latest story.

A **query** is a question or something you ask.

Did You Know?

The word **query** is related to the words *enquire* and *inquiry*.



WordWork

Pick an author whose work you like. Write three queries about things you'd like to know that only the author could answer. Send your queries to the author and wait for the reply.

quandary (noun)

Naomi is in a **quandary**. Her dog had five lovable puppies—should she keep them, sell them, or give them away?

A **quandary** is a state of uncertainty you face as you try to deal with hard issues. In a **quandary**, you don't know what to do.

Did You Know?

Word experts are in a **quandary** over **quandary**. Some say it may have come from the French question, *Qu'en dirai-je?* (What shall I say about it?) Others vote for the Latin question *quanda* (When?), or the Middle English *wandreth* (evil confusion).

WordWork

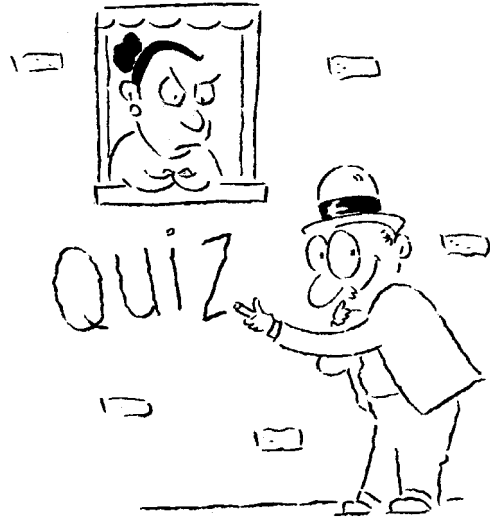
What do you do when you're stuck in a **quandary**? Whom do you talk to?

IN A WORD

Can you pass
this **quiz**?

.....

You've probably taken many quizzes since you began school. But do you know where the word **quiz** comes from? —Dublin, Ireland, that's where! Around 200 years ago, theater manager James Daly boasted that he could invent a new word to get the whole city talking. Daly made up the word **quiz**. One night, as Dublin slept, he got a group of helpers to write the word in chalk all over the city walls. The next day, people awoke to see this strange new word everywhere. Soon, **quiz** came to mean a test of knowledge!



Invent five words of your own and make up definitions for them. Then ask a partner to guess the meanings of your words.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

W Words With a SILENT LETTER

whet (verb)

*The mere sight or smell of food does a lot to **whet** my appetite.*

To whet is to make sharper, stronger, or more eager. You can whet a knife by rubbing it on a whetstone (sharpening stone).

Synonyms

awaken, kindle, arouse

WordWork

What sights, sounds, tastes, or smells **whet** your appetite? Use this sensory details chart to list things that make your mouth water.

Sights	Sounds	Tastes	Smells

whisk (verb, noun)

*Before Mom sees it, the children **whisk** her present out of sight.*

To whisk is to remove something quickly or suddenly, often with a sweeping or brushing motion. A whisk is a hand tool used to sweep or brush (or beat, as eggs).

Did You Know?

The laundry detergent known as Wisk[™] was named to echo the word **whisk**. It suggests to shoppers that it would **whisk** dirt away in a flash.



WordWork

A whisk broom is a kind of household brush. How do you think using a whisk broom is different from using a full-size broom? What would you use a whisk broom for?

Wisk[™] is a registered trademark of Lever Brothers Co.

W Words With a SILENT LETTER

wring (verb)

Wring out your bathing suit before you hang it up to dry.

To wring is to force by twisting or squeezing with the hands. You wring something to get the moisture out of it.

Synonyms

throttle, compress, distort, extract

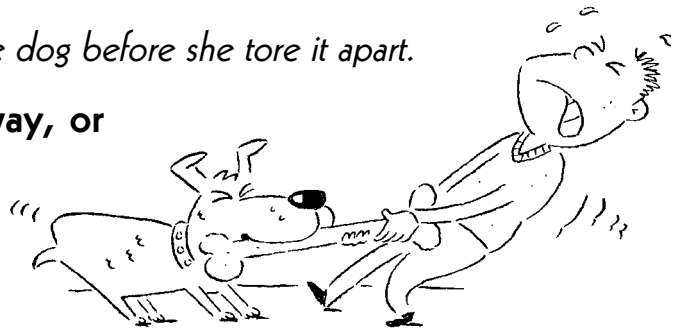
WordWork

Write an original poem or limerick that includes the word **wring**. Read it aloud. Act out the wringing!

wrest (verb)

It took effort to wrest that slipper from the dog before she tore it apart.

To wrest is to twist, pull, or tear away, or to take by force.



Did You Know?

The words **wrest** and *wring* may share the same origins!

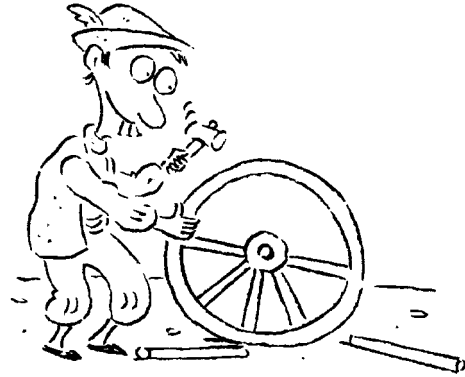
WordWork

Use the words **wrest**, *rest*, and *west* in a single sentence that makes sense. Good luck!

IN A WORD

How **wright**
are you?

This word does not mean the opposite of wrong—although wrong begins with a silent *w*. Rather, a **wright** is an old-fashioned word for a maker of something. Many English last names came from the kinds of jobs people had. Can you guess how old Mr. Cartwright earned his living?



Use a dictionary (or your common sense) to figure out what each of the following might have made:

shipwright _____

wheelwright _____

playwright _____

wainwright _____

Can you think of any common last names that might have come from people's jobs, such as Baker?

Words With DOUBLE LETTERS

collide (verb)

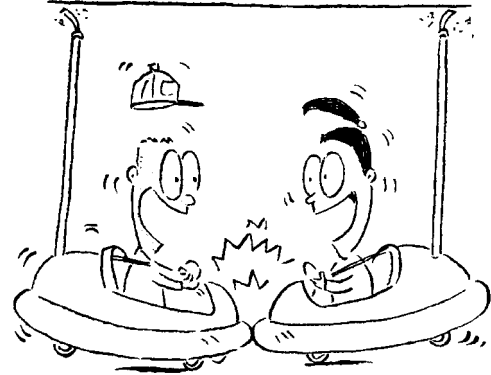
*Watch out that you don't **collide** with that red boat.*

To collide is to crash together with force or to bump into something.

Antonyms

avoid, miss, pass

WordWork



The fun of riding bumper cars is to **collide** on purpose—and nobody gets hurt. Write a list of safety tips that drivers of real cars can use to avoid collisions.

array (noun)

*A coin show had an impressive **array** of rare silver dollars.*

An array is a collection of things set out in an orderly fashion.

Did You Know?

In math, an **array** describes objects set in rows and columns.

WordWork

Draw an **array** of 18 objects, or take 18 stickers and form an eye-catching **array** with them. You can group them into rows and columns, or into any other pattern that appeals to you.

Words With DOUBLE LETTERS

grapple (verb)

*Dad says that if we **grapple** with a problem long enough, we'll find a solution.*

To grapple means to struggle closely with something. You can grapple with something physically, as wrestlers grapple, or mentally, as to grapple with an idea.

Antonyms

let go, release, ignore

WordWork

Imagine a scene from television, books, movies, or cartoons, in which characters **grapple**. Write a paragraph about what they **grapple** with, why they do it, and how things turn out.

festoon (verb)

*For the party, let's **festoon** the doorway with balloons, tinsel, and streamers.*

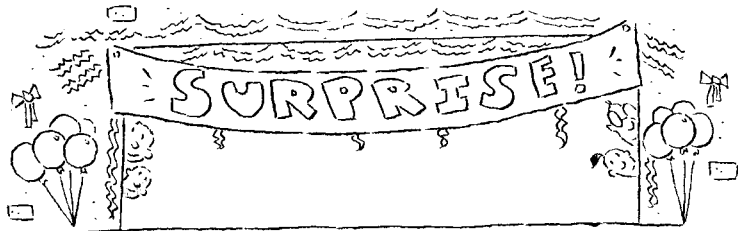
To festoon means to drape with strings or chains of flowers, ribbons, or other jolly decorations.

Synonyms

adorn, embellish, do up

WordWork

Create an invitation to a festive occasion. Include words that describe the festivities. When you finish, **festoon** the invitation with cheerful decorations.



IN A WORD

What's so special about the word **bookkeeper**?

.....

Masses of English words have double letters. You could probably list 99 of them right now, such as *little*, *pebble*, *noodle*, *sheep*, or *jiffy*. And many more words have two sets of double letters, such as *beekeeper*, *nuttiness*, or *peppergrass*. But there's only one word like **bookkeeper**.



What makes **bookkeeper** so unique? It is the only English word that has *three* sets of double letters in a row, with no other letters separating them.

Work with a partner. Think of five words that have double letters, like *pebble* or *sheep*.

Now think of five words that have *two* sets of double letters in a row, like *balloon* and *tattoo*. (Or browse through the dictionary to find some.)

Words With **IN-** and **UN-**

indifferent (adjective)

*What's wrong with the dog that makes him so **indifferent** to his dinner?*

Indifferent means not at all interested in or concerned about. If you don't care one way or the other, you are **indifferent**.

Synonyms

uninterested, uncaring, unresponsive

WordWork

Complete the following statement in three different ways.

*I may be **indifferent** about _____, but I am completely wild about _____.*

incomparable (adjective)

*Thousands of athletes play basketball, but no one ever made it look as graceful and easy as the **incomparable** Michael Jordan.*

Incomparable means matchless or beyond compare.

Antonyms

ordinary, middling, humdrum, unremarkable

WordWork

In your opinion, who is an **incomparable** student? An **incomparable** athlete? An **incomparable** musician? An **incomparable** teacher? An **incomparable** friend? List some **incomparable** people that come to mind. Explain what makes each one beyond compare.



Words With **IN-** and **UN-**

unflagging (adjective)

*The firefighters showed **unflagging** effort as they battled the blazing flames.*

Unflagging means never weakening, failing, or giving up.

Synonyms

tireless, determined, persistent

WordWork

Draw a picture of a flag. Inside it, list words and phrases that describe someone who puts forth **unflagging** effort.

unwieldy (adjective)

*The overstuffed suitcase was too **unwieldy** for Cora to carry up the steps.*

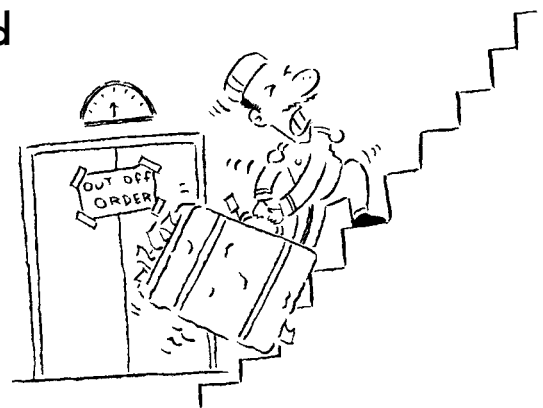
Unwieldy means difficult to hold or hard to manage because of shape, size, weight, or awkwardness.

Synonyms

clumsy, ungainly, awkward, bulky

WordWork

Some tasks or jobs are so **unwieldy** that you may not know where or how to begin. Describe such a task. What makes it so **unwieldy**?



IN A WORD

What sorts of things **undulate**?

M

any words that start with *in-* or *un-* mean *not* what the root is. For example, *inaccurate* means not accurate, and *uneaten*

means not eaten. But this rule does not work for all *un-* words. **Undulate** is one of these “non-*un*” words.



Undulate means to move in waves or like a wave. **Undulate** comes from the Latin word *unda*, which means wave. Can you imagine wheat fields as they **undulate** in the wind? What animals **undulate** as they move? Have you ever seen sports fans “do the wave” so it undulates through a crowded stadium?

Undulate your hands, arms, or body. Then draw three things that **undulate**.

A large empty rectangular box for drawing, intended for the student to draw three things that undulate.

Words With THREE SYLLABLES

riveting (adjective)

*The rescue was so **riveting** that Carmen couldn't take her eyes off the screen.*

Riveting describes something totally fascinating or exciting.

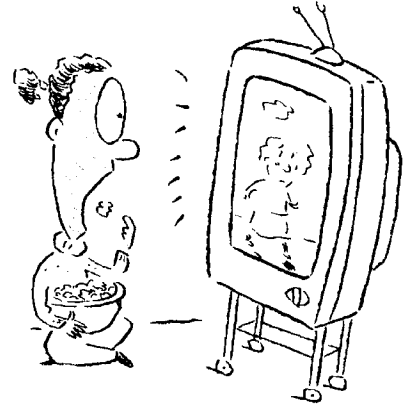
Synonyms

spellbinding, entrancing, compelling

WordWork

A rivet is a metal bolt that holds things together. How do you think this relates to the definition of **riveting**?

Draw a picture of a big rivet. Inside it, describe some things that are **riveting** to you.



haphazard (adjective)

*The books were placed in a **haphazard** way onto the library shelves.*

Haphazard means disorganized, random, without planning, or by chance.

Did You Know?

Things in **haphazard** positions might be upside down, right side up, inside out, vertical, horizontal, and diagonal. They probably aren't in size order, alphabetical order, subject order, age order, or any other order you can easily determine.

WordWork

Get a random assortment of ten books. Spread them out in a **haphazard** way on a table. In what ways can you organize the books so that they are no longer **haphazard**? Explain your plan.

Words With THREE SYLLABLES

gossamer (adjective)

*The spider's **gossamer** web sparkled in the morning dew.*

Gossamer describes the delicate strands of a spider's web. It also means anything very thin, light, and delicate.

Did You Know?

The word **gossamer** comes from St. Martin's Day, a summer festival, and goose, the traditional meal served at it. The delicate cobwebs found at that time of year were called "goose-summer webs," which eventually led to **gossamer**.

WordWork

The word **gossamer** is often used to describe insect wings. Draw a pair of butterfly wings. Inside the wings, list words that come to mind when you think of **gossamer**.

rambunctious (adjective)

*The player's **rambunctious** behavior led the coach to bench him for three games.*

Rambunctious means wild, noisy, rowdy, disorderly, or unruly.

Did You Know?

Rambunctious has unclear origins and ended up with different spellings in different parts of the country: *rum-bustious, rumbunctious, rambuctious, and rambuntious*.

WordWork

You know that antonyms are opposites. Now, in a *quiet* and *orderly* fashion, list at least five more antonyms for **rambunctious**.



IN A WORD

Do you ever get
discombobulated?

Is a six-syllable word twice as good as a three-syllable one? Maybe so, if the word is **discombobulated**. This all-American word is fun to say and not hard to spell. It means being thrown into total confusion.

If you are **discombobulated**, you can't cope. You don't know what to do. You can't think clearly. You are overwhelmed.

Practice saying and spelling **discombobulated**. Draw or describe a scene in which someone is entirely **discombobulated**. Then act it out!



Words From YIDDISH

nosh (verb, noun)

*If you're not very hungry, maybe you'd like to **nosh** on some raisins.*

To **nosh** is to eat between meals or nibble a little snack. A **nosh** is a light meal or small snack.

Did You Know?

Nosh originally came from the German term *nachen*, which means to eat on the sly.

WordWork

Everyone noshes now and then. What do you like to **nosh**? List foods to **nosh** when you crave these different tastes:

Salty nosh

Sweet nosh

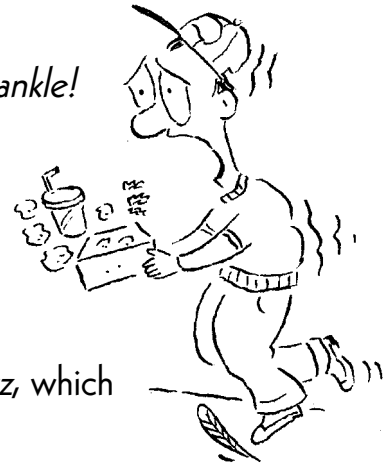
Juicy nosh

Crunchy nosh

klutz (noun)

*Irv is such a **klutz**, he can trip on a feather and sprain his ankle!*

A **klutz** is a clumsy, awkward person or someone who bungles.



Did You Know?

The Yiddish word **klutz** is related to the German word *klotz*, which means a log or a block of wood.

WordWork

Watching a **klutz** bungle can make people laugh. Think of clowns or comic actors whose klutziness makes you chuckle. Then make up a skit in which you pretend to be a **klutz**. Use klutzy moves to make your audience smile.

Words From YIDDISH

shlep (verb, noun)

*We don't have to **shlep** the groceries; the store can deliver them.*

To **shlep** is to drag, lug, pull, haul, or move with great effort. A **shlep** is an unsuccessful person.



Did You Know?

Sometimes the word **shlep** is spelled *schlep*. This makes it look more like its German root—*schleppen*—which means to drag.

WordWork

How much stuff do you **shlep** to and from school? Draw a backpack. In it, list everything you carry on a normal school day. What do you think your loaded pack weighs?

plotz (verb)

*If I have to climb one more flight of stairs, I think I'll **plotz**!*

To **plotz** is to collapse, drop, burst, or explode.

Did You Know?

Plotz is often used in a humorous or exaggerated way: *If I laugh any more, I'll **plotz**.*

WordWork

Where is your perfect place to **plotz**? On a soft couch? In a grassy field? Inside a sleeping bag? Write a description of what it feels like to **plotz**, and where you'd like to be when you're ready to do so.

IN A WORD

What is Yiddish?

Yiddish is an old language originally spoken by central and eastern European Jews. **Yiddish** blends German, Hebrew, Polish, Russian, Rumanian, Ukrainian, and other regional dialects. It is written in Hebrew letters. Very few people can speak or read **Yiddish** today. *Oy!* It's an endangered language. But many of its colorful words and expressions have made it into English.



Do you ever say *gesundheit* after someone sneezes? Have you ever eaten a *kosher* hotdog? Do you ever *kibitz* with friends until you lose track of time? Do you know anyone with enough *chutzpah* to stand up to a bully? Who in your class always behaves like a *mensch*? Use a dictionary or your own common sense to figure out the meaning of these **Yiddish** words.

gesundheit _____

kosher _____

kibitz _____

chutzpah _____

mensch _____

Three-Syllable NOUNS

labyrinth (noun)

*The giant **labyrinth** at the amusement park had so many winding and connected passageways, we thought we'd never find our way out!*

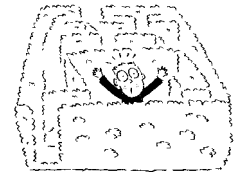
A labyrinth is a maze, web, tangle, or any complicated or confusing arrangement.

Did You Know?

Labyrinth came from Greek mythology. King Minos of Crete had an intricate maze built to hold the dangerous beast, the Minotaur. Brave Theseus entered the **labyrinth**, killed the Minotaur, and found his way out with a long thread he unrolled behind him.

WordWork

Draw a **labyrinth** (maze) and challenge your classmates to solve it.



replica (noun)

*Nancy has never seen the Statue of Liberty, but she has a plastic **replica** of it.*

A replica is an exact copy, imitation, or model of an original object.

Synonyms

reproduction, mock-up, likeness, look-alike

WordWork

Use clay or other art materials to make a **replica** of a building, a work of art, a car, or another object. You have just replicated the original object. Tell what the verb *replicate* means in your own words.

Three-Syllable NOUNS

boondoggle (noun)

*The tunnel seemed like a great idea, but it turned out to be a **boondoggle** because it cost way too much and was never finished.*

A **boondoggle** is a worthless or pointless project.

Did You Know?

The first use of **boondoggle** is credited to Boy Scout leader Robert Link, of Rochester, New York, in 1929. **Boondoggle** is what Mr. Link called the woven leather lanyards his Scouts made and wore around their necks for decorations.

WordWork

Have you ever begged and pleaded for something that turned out to be a **boondoggle**? Write about this. Describe what went wrong.

dilemma (noun)

*What a **dilemma**! Do I tell the teacher the truth—that my dog really did eat my homework, or do I just do it again?*

A **dilemma** is a situation that demands picking between two choices—and both are problems!



Synonyms

problem, impasse, jam, mess

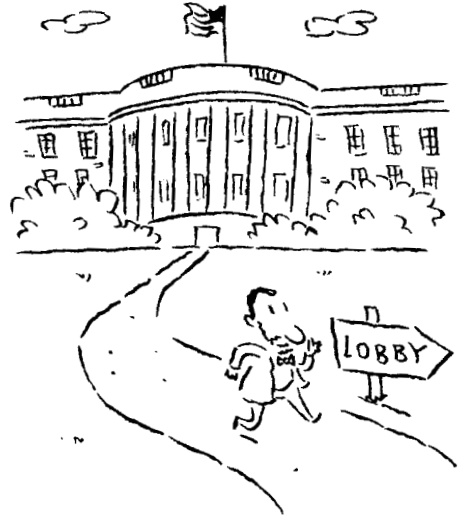
WordWork

The word **dilemma** begins with the prefix *di-*, which means two, twice, or double. Explain how the idea of *twoness* can help you remember what a **dilemma** is.

IN A WORD

President Coins New Word!

After a hard day, Ulysses S. Grant liked to relax in the lobby of the Willard Hotel, across the street from the White House. Word of this habit spread fast. Knowing that Grant would be in that large public room, a steady stream of people would drop by to try to convince him of one thing or another.



Grant came to call these persuasive people **lobbyists**. And the word stuck!

Find out what **lobbyists** do in Washington, D.C., nowadays and write it here.

If you could be a lobbyist in Washington, D.C., for a cause that is important to you, what would it be? How would you try to convince others to agree with you? Write down what you would say.

Words for EXCITED/NOT EXCITED

ecstatic (adjective)

Ben was **ecstatic** when he won tickets to the World Series.

Ecstatic means overjoyed, delighted, and thrilled—almost carried away by excitement and pleasure.

Did You Know?

Ecstatic comes from the noun *ecstasy*, which describes a feeling of extreme joy, happiness, bliss, and overwhelming delight.

WordWork

Imagine yourself in an **ecstatic** mood. What would make you feel that way? How would you act? How would you look? What might you say? Whom would you want to share your ecstasy with? Write about it.

avid (adjective)

He is an **avid** reader of anything—and everything—about sharks.

Avid describes a sense of greediness about something. If you are avid, you are extremely eager and enthusiastic; you can't get enough, and you can't wait for the next one!

Synonyms

willing, eager, devoted

WordWork

What are you **avid** about? Do you know anyone who shares your **avid** feelings? Describe what you are devoted to. Make readers feel your sense of excitement and eagerness.

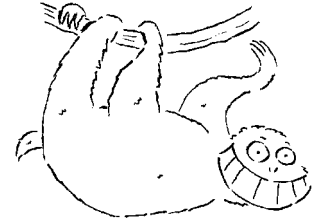


Words for EXCITED/NOT EXCITED

slothful (adjective)

A *slothful* worker probably won't be able to hold a job for long.

Slothful means lazy, idle, or slow. Someone who is slothful is unwilling to work or put forth effort.



Did You Know?

You might think that **slothful** comes from the rain forest animal, the sloth. But that creature wasn't named until the 19th century. **Slothful**, which appeared about 600 years earlier, comes from the Middle English word *slou*, which meant laziness.

WordWork

The sloth is a rain forest animal that moves extremely slowly. Imitate a sloth. Then write about a time when you felt **slothful**.

lackadaisical (adjective)

If you are *lackadaisical* on the tennis court, your opponent will have an advantage.

If you are lackadaisical, you show lack of interest, enthusiasm, or spirit. You may seem dreamy, out of it, or distracted.

Antonyms

spirited, interested, excited, active, caring

WordWork

Write a humorous limerick or other kind of poem about the effects of someone's **lackadaisical** play, performance, or behavior.

Words from AROUND THE WORLD

rendezvous (noun)

*We planned our **rendezvous** at the north side of the fountain at noon.*

Rendezvous (RON-day-voo) is a French word. A **rendezvous** is a meeting or appointment that two or more people set. To plan a **rendezvous**, they pick a time and a place.

Did You Know?

Rendezvous can also be used as a verb to describe the act of meeting. For example: *Let's **rendezvous** at our usual spot at 3:00.*



WordWork

Suppose you and a friend were planning a lunchtime **rendezvous**. Think about the details you must establish. Write a note to your friend to set up this **rendezvous**.

crescendo (noun)

*As the party went on, the **crescendo** of noise bothered some guests.*

Crescendo (cre-SHEN-doe) is an Italian word. A **crescendo** is a musical term for a gradual increase in loudness. In general, a **crescendo** is any rise in force, loudness, or amount.

Synonyms

upsurge, swelling, loudening, buildup, rise

WordWork

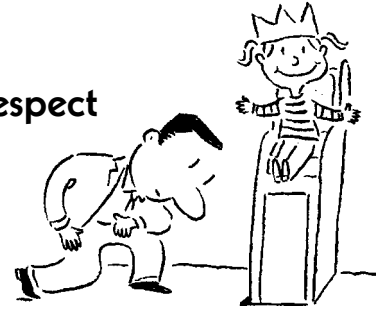
Work with a partner. Take turns singing a song (or reciting a poem) in which you make a **crescendo** somewhere. See if your partner can tell when the **crescendo** begins and when it reaches its high point.

Words From AROUND THE WORLD

kowtow (verb)

*The bully expects everyone to **kowtow** to him.*

To **kowtow** is to bow down to show unquestioning respect and flattery, or to be obedient, passive, and meek.



Did You Know?

Kowtow (koh-TOW) is the English spelling of a Chinese word. In Mandarin Chinese, to **kowtow** literally means to knock your head. To **kowtow**, someone would kneel down and then bow so low that his or her forehead would touch the ground.

WordWork

Act out how to **kowtow** to someone—but don't bump your head! Then list characters you know from books, movies, or elsewhere who might expect people to **kowtow** to them.

bonanza (noun)

*At low tide on Captiva Island, collectors can find a **bonanza** of seashells.*

Bonanza is a Spanish word. A **bonanza** is a rich source of wealth or profit. It is also a lucky find.

Did You Know?

Bonanza comes from Spanish and means fair weather at sea. Miners during the California Gold Rush of 1849 may have learned the word from Spanish sailors, and then applied it to a rich strike of gold. Now it means a lucky bonus.

WordWork

Imagine that a genie will grant you any **bonanza** of your choice. What would your **bonanza** be? Write a description of it, and explain what you would do with it.

IN A WORD

What word comes
from nothing?

The word **cipher** has many meanings. As a noun, a **cipher** is secret writing or a code. It is also the key you use to unlock a code. **Cipher** is a synonym for the number zero. Also, a **cipher** is a mysterious person who doesn't reveal much about himself or herself. As a verb, to **cipher** means to figure out by arithmetic.



That's a lot of meanings for a word that originally came from the Arabic word for empty!

Use a dictionary to help you write sentences that reflect the different meanings of **cipher**. Write your sentences on the lines provided. Can you figure out how to use the word *decipher*?

cipher (noun) _____

cipher (synonym for zero) _____

cipher (mysterious person) _____

cipher (verb) _____

decipher (verb) _____

Words for TOPS!

paramount (adjective)

*The flight crew's **paramount** concern is passenger safety.*

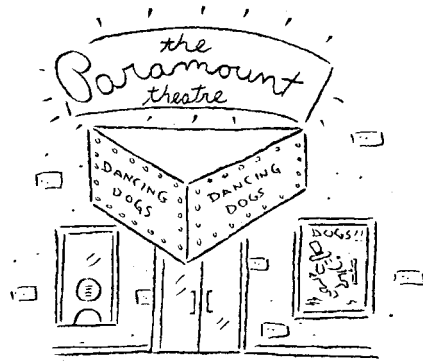
Paramount means being above all others in importance, power, or rank.

Synonyms

chief, utmost, supreme

WordWork

Some businesses use the word **paramount** in their names. What message do you think they want customers to get? Look through a telephone directory for your area (white pages or yellow pages). Make a list of businesses that have the word **paramount** in their names. Do you know any of them? Do they live up to their names?



eminent (adjective)

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was one of America's most **eminent** speakers.*

Eminent means well known, outstanding, or highly respected. An **eminent** person is very famous and ranks above others.

Antonyms

common, undistinguished, unimportant, lowly

WordWork

List **eminent** people in each category:

An **eminent** woman

An **eminent** world leader

An **eminent** scientist

An **eminent** historical figure

Words for TOPS!

peerless (adjective)

*The singer gave a **peerless** performance at the music contest.*

Peerless means without an equal, matchless, above all others.



Did You Know?

You may know the word *peer* from *peer group*, *peer editor*, and so on. *Peer* means an equal partner. You know that the suffix *-less* means without. So, **peerless** means without equal.

WordWork

Describe a **peerless** performance, achievement, effort, or project that you know about or have witnessed. Use the term **peerless** in your description, and support your opinion.

superlative (adjective)

*"Your poem is **superlative**," said the English teacher. "It's good enough to publish."*

Superlative means the very best and of the highest quality.

Synonyms

supreme, utmost, outstanding

WordWork

The prefix *super-*, as in the word **superlative**, means over or above, very much, or greater than others of its kind. Think of five other words that begin with *super-*, and explain how each is a **superlative** compared with others like it.

Words That START WITH Z

zany (adjective)

*Those **zany** guys stumble upon trouble, and then find wildly funny ways to get out of it.*

Zany means funny in a clownish or foolish way.

Antonyms

serious, sedate, sensible, normal

WordWork

Brainstorm with a classmate other words that remind you of **zany**. The Marx Brothers were among Hollywood's most **zany** comedians. Try to tell a **zany** joke or do a **zany** comedy routine in your own **zany** style.

zephyr (noun)

*A calm **zephyr** rustled the delicate lace curtains.*

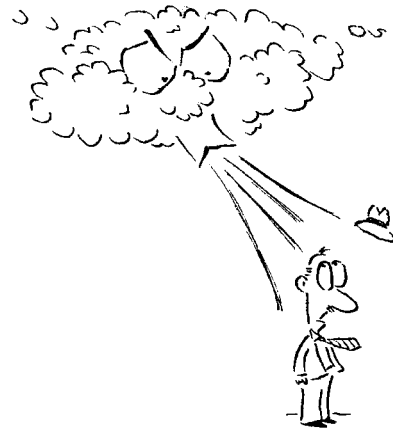
A **zephyr** is any soft, gentle, mild breeze.

Did You Know?

The word **zephyr** is related to the Greek *Zephyros*, or the western wind.

WordWork

You know that the word **zephyr** comes from Greek mythology. Consult a dictionary, mythology book, or other resource to find out the connection.



Words That START WITH Z

zeal (noun)

*Lisa adores science and approaches each class with **zeal**.*

Zeal is strong, deep enthusiasm or eagerness.

Did You Know?

Someone who shows great **zeal** can be described as *zealous*. And one who is zealous can be called a *zealot*.

WordWork

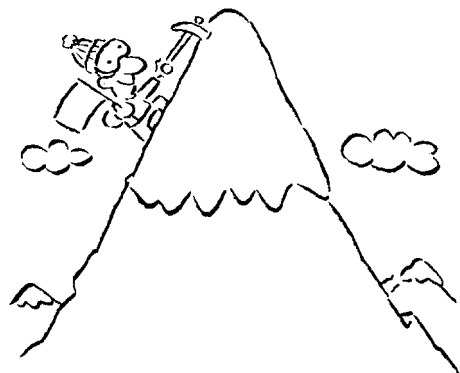
Take each of the four letters that spell the word **zeal**. Use each one as the first letter of words you could associate with **zeal**.

Z is for _____. **E** is for _____. **A** is for _____. **L** is for _____.

zenith (noun)

*Playing the lead in *Romeo and Juliet* was the **zenith** of Will's acting life.*

The **zenith** is the highest point, peak, or greatest achievement. In science, the **zenith** is the point in the sky directly overhead.



Synonyms

apex, summit, pinnacle

WordWork

The opposite of **zenith** is *nadir*. Both words come from the science of astronomy. Use the two words in one sentence that makes the meaning of each clear.

IN A WORD

Can you spell
zyzzyva?

W

hat is **zyzzyva**, apart from being the last entry in some dictionaries?
A **zyzzyva** is a kind of weevil, or plant-eating insect. The **zyzzyva** lives in tropical regions, happily hopping and munching leaves.



Suppose that a Scrabble® set had three Zs. (It doesn't; there's only one.) Figure out the score for **zyzzyva**, using Scrabble® point values. For an extra challenge, figure out the maximum possible score, which depends upon where on the board the word might go. And don't forget the extra 50 points for making a seven-letter word! Can you think of any other high-scoring words?

Scrabble® is a registered trademark of Hasbro, Inc.

Comprehensive Word List

abecedarian
acronym
 ample
 apprentice
apricot
 arc
 array
 avid
azure
 baffled
 bland
 bolt
 bonanza
bookkeeper
 boondoggle
 bovine
boycott
cackle
canary
canine
cartwright
 caterwaul
 catty
 cease
celadon
 chortle
chuckle
chutzpah
cipher
citron
 clamber
 cobalt
 cogitate
 collide
 coy
 crescendo
crimson
 deadpan
 devour
diesel
 dilemma
 diminutive
discombobulated
 dog-eared
 dogged
 dovetail

dungarees
 ecstatic
 embark
emerald
 eminent
eponym
equine
façade
feline
 festoon
 flabbergasted
flaxen
 flit
 flummoxed
 galumph
 gape
gesundheit
giggle
 girth
 glower
 gossamer
 grapple
 guffaw
 haphazard
henna
 hesitate
 hodgepodge
 incomparable
 indifferent
indigo
 irk
kibitz
 klutz
kosher
 kowtow
 labyrinth
 lackadaisical
laser
leotard
 limelight
lobbyist
 loot
 lope
lupine
 malady
marigold

masticate
 mayhem
 meander
mensh
 middling
 minuscule
 mirth
mnemonics
 monopolize
nabob
 NASA
 negotiate
 nonplussed
 nosh
 novice
olive
 orb
ovine
 paramount
 peerless
peridot
playwright
 plod
 plotz
porcine
 procrastinate
 pundit
 qualm
 quandary
 quantify
 query
quiz
radar
 rambunctious
 ransack
 rendezvous
 repast
 replica
 reverberate
 riveting
 routine
ruby
 saga
 sage
sapphire
 saunter

saxophone
scarlet
scuba
shipwright
 shlep
 sleuth
 slither
 slothful
 sneer
snicker
 steadfast
 superlative
tangerine
topaz
typical
 unassuming
undulate
 unflagging
UNICEF
 unwieldy
ursine
 vast
 veranda
vermillion
 veteran
 victuals
vulpine
wainwright
 weep
wheelwright
 whet
 whimper
 whisk
 wrest
wright
 wring
Yiddish
 zany
 zeal
 zenith
 zephyr
zyzzyva

* Words in *italics* appear in
 "In a Word" features.