

HOW-TO GUIDE

Searching the OED



Browsing the dictionary:

The *Browse* panel is in the centre of the Home page and in the top right-hand corner of every other page:



Browse the dictionary from A-Z

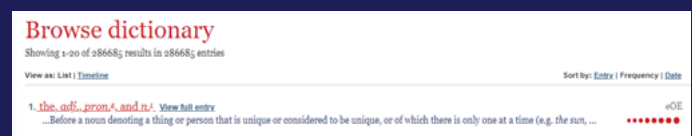
Browse A-Z dictionary entries much as you would a printed dictionary, by clicking 'Dictionary' in the Browse panel (see above).

A list of entries beginning with A, n. is displayed. Each consists of the headword (the name of the entry) and the entry's first line. You can jump to any alphabetical point in the dictionary, or order the entries by date or frequency instead of alphabetically, if you prefer.

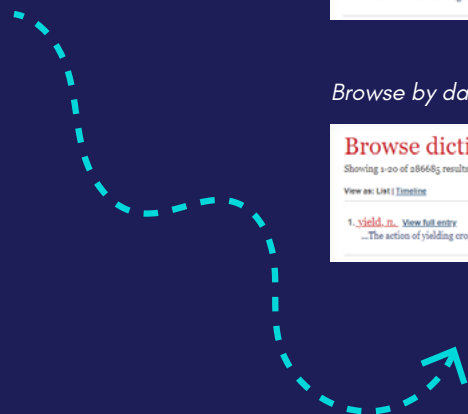
Browse by entry:



Browse by frequency:



Browse by date:



Jump to:

m

Sort by: Entry | Date

| M, n. | OE |
|----------------------|------|
| m-, comb. form | 1997 |
| Ma., n.1 | 1579 |
| Ma., n.2 | 1584 |
| ma, n.3 | 1829 |
| Ma, n.4 | 1925 |
| ma, adj. | 1791 |
| maa, v. and int. | 1728 |
| ma'abara, n. | 1950 |
| Maalox, n. | 1951 |
| ma'am, n.1 | 1671 |
| maam, n.2 | 1825 |
| ma'am, v. | 1813 |
| maanhaar, n. | 1896 |
| maar, n. | 1826 |
| maar, conj. and adv. | 1896 |
| Maariv, n. | 1871 |
| maas, n. | 1882 |
| maasbanker, n. | 1831 |
| Maastricht, n. | 1991 |

Explore using the word wheel

The *word wheel*, headed 'Jump to:', contains the list of all the entries in the dictionary. It always opens with the most recently viewed entry highlighted in the centre of the list. Click on any entry to display it.

Searching the dictionary:

How to use quick search

The *quick search* bar can be found on the OED homepage and at the top of every entry page, and finds main dictionary entries, such as alphabet, break, xylophone. It also finds phrases and compounds listed within main entries, such as to look up or alphabet book, and variant spellings such as dictionarie.

In a *quick search*, it is not necessary to type punctuation or worry about special characters, accents, hyphens, or capital letters.

[Discover more about using quick search here.](#)

Home page view:

Quick search:

[Lost for Words?](#) | [Advanced search](#) | [Help](#)

View on rest of oed.com:

Quick search:

[Lost for Words?](#) | [Advanced search](#) | [Help](#)

Wildcard searches

The quick and advanced searches will not recognize a misspelling (although if no results are found, you will be offered a list of the closest alternatives alphabetically). If you do not know how to spell a word, you can use a *wildcard* character in your search. A *wildcard* is a symbol which stands for any character. Two wildcards are available. The question mark ? represents the occurrence of any one single character, and the asterisk * represents the occurrence of any number of characters (or no character at all).

For example:

- c?t finds cat, cot, cut
- c*t finds cat, caught, commencement, conflict, consent, cot, cut, etc.

Wildcards are useful if you do not know how to spell a word, if you are not sure in what form the term you want appears in the dictionary, or if you want to find several terms beginning with the same root. Type your wildcard search directly into the quick search box. [Find out more here.](#)

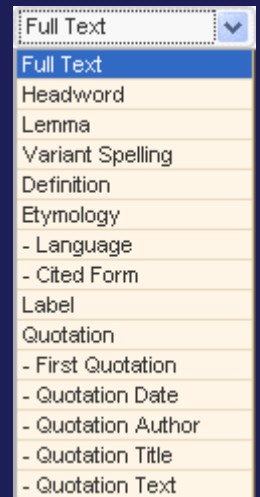
How to use the advanced search

Search area options:

An *advanced search* is a full search of the entire dictionary text. It finds your term wherever it occurs in the dictionary. This could be in the form of an entry name, part of another word's definition, in a quotation, etc.

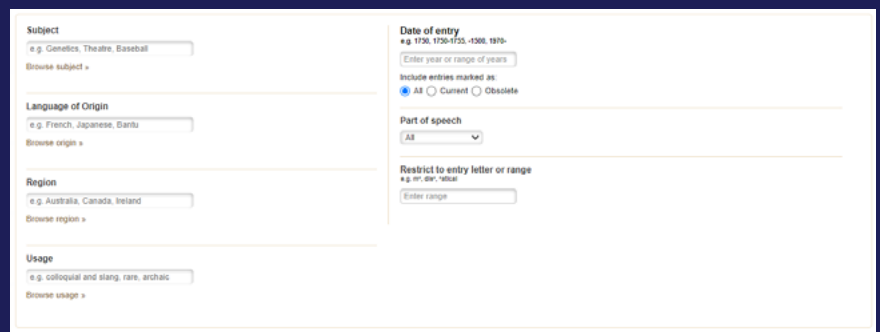
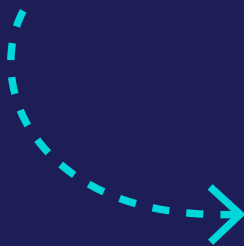
Advanced search can be especially useful for very specific searches. You can utilise the search area functionality to search by each section of an entry. You can also use filters to narrow your search to match certain criteria, for example selecting 'Korean' in the language of origin filter will provide results for all words of Korean origin.

Advanced search is located under the Search box at the top of the page or in the centre of the Home page. [Discover more about using advanced search here.](#)



A dropdown menu with 'Full Text' selected. The menu items are: Full Text, Headword, Lemma, Variant Spelling, Definition, Etymology, - Language, - Cited Form, Label, Quotation, - First Quotation, - Quotation Date, - Quotation Author, - Quotation Title, - Quotation Text.

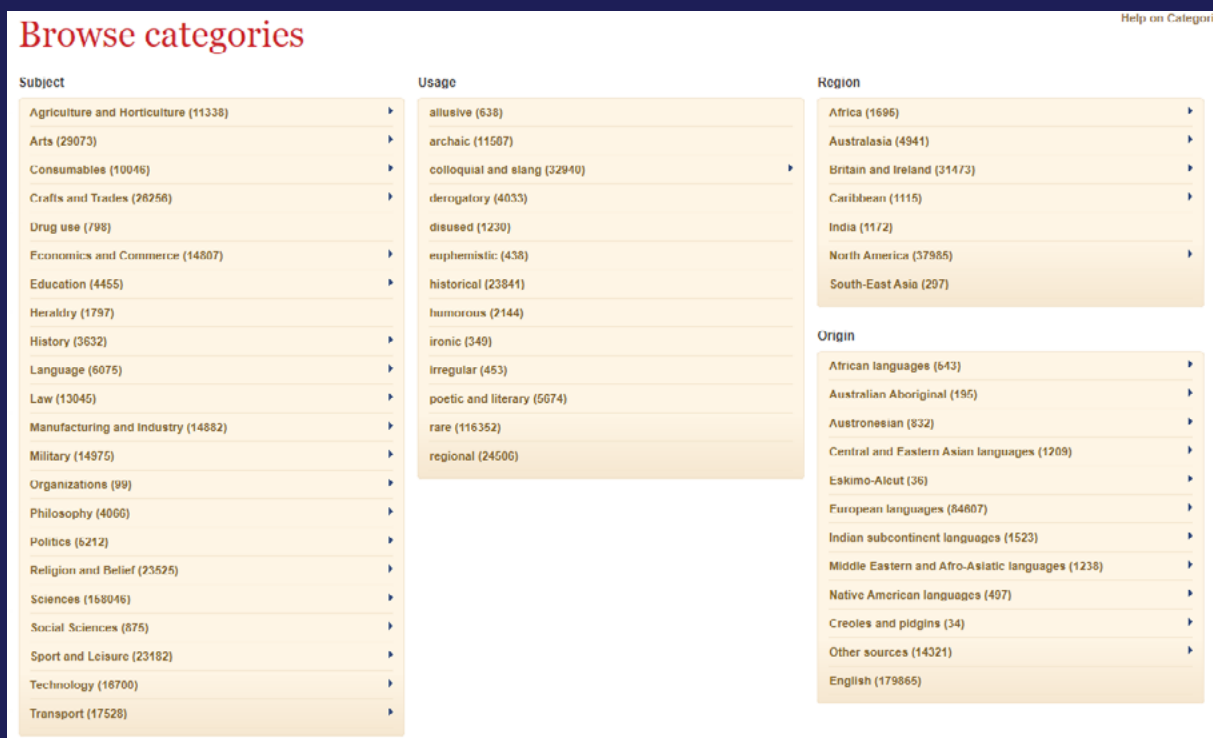
Filtering options:



Advanced search filters including: Subject (e.g. Genetics, Theatre, Baseball), Language of Origin (e.g. French, Japanese, Danish), Region (e.g. Australia, Canada, Ireland), Usage (e.g. colloquial and slang, rare, archaic), Date of entry (e.g. 1700, 1750-1775, -1500, 1970-), Part of speech (All), and Restrict to entry letter or range (e.g. M, 1950-1959).

Browsing by categories or sources:

Categories allow you to explore the dictionary through groupings of words in, for instance, a subject or from a particular origin. If you want to find all the Carribean borrowings in English, or find the first word related to espionage to enter the dictionary, this is the function for you.



Browse categories

Subject

- Agriculture and Horticulture (11338)
- Arts (29073)
- Consumables (10046)
- Crafts and Trades (26256)
- Drug use (798)
- Economics and Commerce (14807)
- Education (4455)
- Heraldry (1797)
- History (3632)
- Language (6075)
- Law (13045)
- Manufacturing and Industry (14882)
- Military (14975)
- Organizations (99)
- Philosophy (4066)
- Politics (6212)
- Religion and Belief (23525)
- Sciences (169046)
- Social Sciences (875)
- Sport and Leisure (23182)
- Technology (16700)
- Transport (17528)

Usage

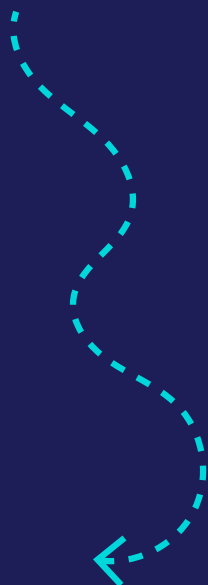
- allusive (638)
- archaic (11507)
- colloquial and slang (32940)
- derogatory (4033)
- disused (1230)
- euphemistic (438)
- historical (23841)
- humorous (2144)
- ironic (349)
- Irregular (453)
- poetic and literary (5674)
- rare (116352)
- regional (24506)

Region

- Africa (1696)
- Australasia (4941)
- Britain and Ireland (31473)
- Caribbean (1115)
- India (1172)
- North America (37985)
- South-East Asia (297)

Origin

- African languages (643)
- Australian Aboriginal (195)
- Austronesian (832)
- Central and Eastern Asian languages (1209)
- Eskimo-Aleut (36)
- European languages (84807)
- Indian subcontinent languages (1523)
- Middle Eastern and Afro-Asiatic languages (1238)
- Native American languages (497)
- Creoles and pidgins (34)
- Other sources (14321)
- English (179865)



With *sources* you can browse the top 1000 sources to be cited as example sentences in the dictionary.



Top 1000 sources in the OED

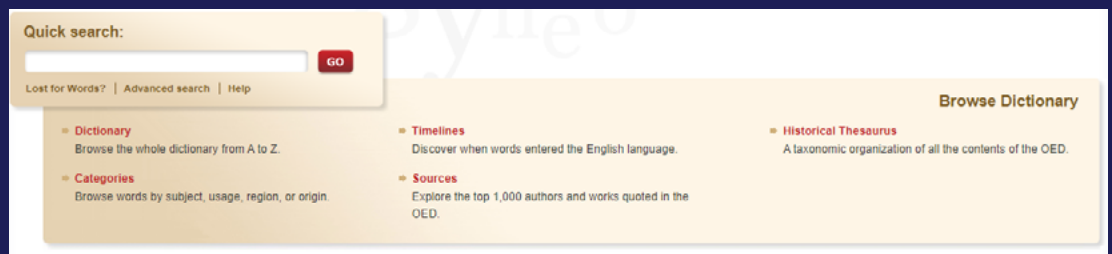
Search within top 1000 sources

Click a column header to change the sort order of the table, click again to reverse sort.

| Rank | Source | Dates | Total number of quotations | First evidence for word | First evidence for sense |
|------|-----------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | <i>Times</i> | 1785– | 36204 | 1624 | 7435 |
| 2. | <i>William Shakespeare</i> | 1564–1616 | 33199 | 1631 | 8207 |
| 3. | <i>Walter Scott</i> | 1771–1832 | 16982 | 483 | 2287 |
| 4. | <i>Philosophical Transactions</i> | 1685– | 14919 | 2004 | 5433 |
| 5. | <i>Encyclopaedia Britannica</i> | 1785– | 13878 | 929 | 3633 |
| 6. | <i>Geoffrey Chaucer</i> | c1340–1400 | 12897 | 2000 | 5292 |
| 7. | <i>John Milton</i> | 1609–1674 | 12444 | 612 | 2140 |
| 8. | <i>Carson Mackil</i> | c1400–1450 | 11901 | 1433 | 4194 |
| 9. | <i>Nature</i> | 1869– | 11309 | 729 | 2621 |
| 10. | <i>Daily News</i> | 1846– | 9977 | 493 | 2712 |

You can find both *categories* and *sources* on the home page search bar, as well as a link to the Historical Thesaurus, which allows you to search for historical synonyms.

[Find our helpful guide to the Historical Thesaurus here.](#)



Quick search:

[Lost for Words?](#) | [Advanced search](#) | [Help](#)

Dictionary
Browse the whole dictionary from A to Z.

Categories
Browse words by subject, usage, region, or origin

Timelines
Discover when words entered the English language.

Sources
Explore the top 1,000 authors and works quoted in the OED.

Historical Thesaurus
A taxonomic organization of all the contents of the OED.

[Browse Dictionary](#)

Understanding the results page:

If there is only one result from your search, you'll be taken directly to that entry. If your search has multiple results, a list will be displayed. Results are grouped by part of speech, and you can re-order results by frequency or date to suit your search needs.

Results are also shown for related phrases, definitions, quotations, etymologies, and full text of the OED. You can also widen your search from your results page, by clicking on 'quotations' for example, if you'd like to see quotations which contain your searched term, or 'phrases' if you'd like to see phrases that contain it.

Quick search results

Showing 1-2 of 2 results in 2 entries

Widen search? Find 'mouse' in: [phrases \(164\)](#) » [definitions \(260\)](#) » [etymologies \(128\)](#) » [quotations \(2209\)](#) » [full text \(1289\)](#)

View as: [List](#) | [Timeline](#)

Sort by: [Entry](#) | [Frequency](#) | [Date](#)

1. [mouse, n.](#) [View full entry](#)

eOE



...Any of numerous small rodents of the family *Muridae* (which also includes rats, voles, gerbils, etc.), which usually have a pointed snout, relatively large eyes and ears, and a long...

2. [mouse, v.](#) [View full entry](#)

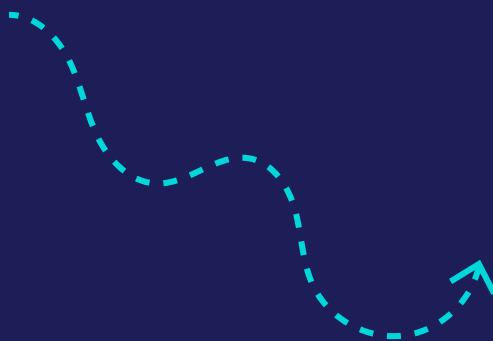
a1275



...intransitive. Esp. of a cat, owl, or fox: to hunt for or catch mice....

Further refine your search by using the options that appear on the right-hand side of the results page. When you select an option, the results list will refresh accordingly.

[Watch our detailed guide to understanding the results page.](#)



Refine your search

- ▶ Subject
- ▶ Language of Origin
- ▶ Region
- ▶ Usage
- ▶ Part of Speech
- ▶ Date of First Citation
- ▶ First Cited in

Additional Resources

[Explore the OED](#)

[Watch our helpful video guides](#)

[Discover more about how to use the OED](#)

[Discover more about search functionality in the OED](#)

