



What is in your Oxford dictionary?

A **dictionary** tells you much more than the meaning of a word. You can discover its word class, if it changes, how to pronounce it, how to use it in a sentence, where it comes from, and even other words in the same family.



GETTING STARTED

Fill in the blanks.

Colour or bold headwords help you find words easily and different meanings are numbered. How many meanings of 'great' are there?

Other words that come from the headword are listed too. What two words are derived from 'great'?

Word classes are given for every headword. What word class is 'Greek'?

great ADJECTIVE

- 1 very large ♦ *A great hill rose before them.*
- 2 well above average; exceptional ♦ *She is a person of great courage.*
- 3 very important or distinguished ♦ *a great statesman*
- 4 (informal) very good or enjoyable ♦ *We all had a great time.*
- 5 older or younger by one generation ♦ *a great-grandson*

▶ greatly ADVERB

▶ greatness NOUN

SYNONYMS (meaning 1) large, huge, big, enormous, massive, gigantic, colossal; (meaning 2) considerable, exceptional, outstanding, extraordinary; (meaning 3) famous, eminent, distinguished, celebrated, prominent; (meaning 4) enjoyable, excellent, marvellous, wonderful

Example sentences show the word in context to help you understand its meaning. Which headword has the sentence *We all had a great time.*

Synonyms build your vocabulary. Choose a synonym for 'great'.

Panels give information on word origins. Write down a word that comes from Greek.

Citations, or sentences from books, show how writers use the word. What is a unicorn?

Word histories explain how words changed over time. What is the origin of 'pomegranate'?

Language panels give more information on key topics to help you understand more. Give an example of onomatopoeia.

Greek ADJECTIVE

to do with ancient or modern Greece or its people

Greek NOUN

- 1 the language of Greece, which has ancient and modern forms
- 2 a person from Greece

Greek words in English

The spelling of an English word often shows that it comes from ancient Greek. Many words which begin with *ph-* and *ps-* are Greek in origin (e.g. *phobia*, *psychic*), as are words beginning with *ch-* which have a *k* sound (e.g. *chirology*, *chord*, *choreography*, and *chorus*). The Greek origin of other words, like *dragon* and *planet* (from Greek words meaning respectively 'serpent' and 'wanderer') is less obvious.

English uses many prefixes and suffixes of Greek origin. The prefixes *bio-*, *eco-*, *mega-*, and *micro-* are derived from the Greek words *bios* 'life', *oikos* 'house', *megas* 'great', and *mikros* 'small', and are still being used to form new words, like *biodiversity*, *ecosystem*, *megabyte*, and *microwave*. And the Greek words *graphein* 'to write', *logia* 'study', and *patheia* 'feeling' have produced the suffixes *-graphy*, *-logy*, and *-pathy*, which feature in many English words, such as *biography*, *calligraphy*, *astrology*, *mythology*, *sympathy*, and *telepathy*.

grenade (say grin-ayd) NOUN grenades a small bomb thrown by hand

WORD HISTORY from Old French *pome grenate* 'pomegranate' (because the shape of the grenade was once similar to a pomegranate)

only

only ADJECTIVE

1 being the one person or thing of a kind; sole ♦ *I was the only person to volunteer to wash the dishes.*

2 an only child is a child who has no brothers or sisters

only ADVERB

1 no more than; and that is all

Because I was a half-vampire I aged at only a fifth the rate of humans. — *Darren Shan, Tunnels of Blood*

2 nothing other than; solely

A unicorn is a magic animal, and only a maiden can catch it. — *T. H. White, The Once and Future King*

3 no longer ago than ♦ *I saw her only yesterday.*

only CONJUNCTION

except that; however ♦ *He often makes promises, only he never keeps them.*

onomatopoeia (say on-om-at-o-pee-a)

NOUN

(Language) the formation of words that imitate or suggest what they stand for, e.g. *cuckoo*, *plop*, *sizzle*

▶ onomatopoeic ADJECTIVE

WORD HISTORY from Greek *onoma* 'name' and *poiein* 'to make'

onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the effect produced when the sound of a word seems to imitate what it describes. Words for animal noises are often onomatopoeic, like *baa*, *bark*, *caw*, *cheep*, *chirp*, *growl*, *meow*, and *mew*; so are words describing loud noises, or sounds made by machines, like *bang*, *beep*, *buzz*, *clang*, and *whirr*. The sound or movement of water, steam, or wind can be evoked with onomatopoeic words like *gurgle*, *hiss*, *murmur*, *rustle*, or *wheeze*; and the idea of speed can be conveyed with *whizz* or *whoosh*.

Writers sometimes use onomatopoeia together with alliteration to create poetic effects, as in the swishing sound evoked by 'the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of the curtain' in Edgar Allan Poe's poem, 'The Raven'. See also the panel on alliteration.

? How many did you get right?

2 = NOVICE

5 = EXPERT

10 = MAESTRO



You can use your Oxford English Dictionary for Schools for these activities