

Dictionary Skills

A **dictionary** is an important reference material. You can use it to find a word's definition, part of speech, pronunciation, syllables and more. This lesson will teach you how to use print and online **dictionaries** to help you improve your writing, spelling and vocabulary.

No mention is made, however, of the **important** role they play in language learning. **Dictionaries** are language learning tools. They can be used in classrooms and also as a self-learning resource. ... But mastering **dictionary skills** is **important** in the language learning process, particularly regarding reading and writing

In dictionaries there are guide words and entry words.

Guide word. noun. The definition of a guide word is a word printed at the top of a page indicating the first or last word entry on that page. An example of guide word is the word "hesitate" printed on a page in a dictionary with the word "hesitate" listed as the first word on the page.

The purpose of the guide words is to help them find a word more quickly.

Definition of **entry word**. : a word or term often in distinctive type placed at the beginning of an entry (as in a dictionary) : headword.

How to use a dictionary effectively

1. look up the meaning of an English word you see or hear.
2. find the English translation of a word in your language.
3. check the spelling of a word.
4. check the plural of a noun or past tense of a verb.
5. find out other grammatical information about a word.

6. find the synonym or antonym of a word.
7. look up the collocations of a word.

Today's big bilingual dictionaries contain an amazing amount of useful information, but most users don't bother to look at most of it. They go straight from the word they look up to the first translation they see, then back to the text they are reading. This is a very inefficient way to use a dictionary, as these Dictionary Skills pages will show you. Let's begin by looking at some of the types of information available, then later we'll see what to do with it. Look at the following list, and check off which items you think most of the dictionaries contains:

- ☐ Translations of words
- ☐ Translations of phrases
- ☐ Translations of Proper Nouns (Geographical, Historical...)
- ☐ Help in choosing among different meanings
- ☐ Labels to indicate if a meaning is colloquial or vulgar
- ☐ Labels to indicate the field this meaning is commonly used in (cinema, automobile, dentistry, etc.)
- ☐ How to pronounce words
- ☐ Gender of words
- ☐ Different forms of words
- ☐ Part of speech of words
- ☐ Sample verb conjugations
- ☐ Conjugation of all verbs

- ☐ Common expressions
- ☐ Numbers, Dates, Measures
- ☐ Idioms
- ☐ What other words a word typically fits together with
- ☐ Abbreviations

Then compare the result with what your little dictionary contains if you have one...

One of the aims of Dictionary Skills is to make you aware of all the information available and how it can be used to better decipher texts.

When should I use my dictionary?

As you know by now, you should first read through a text and try to understand the main points and the general subject **without** the use of a dictionary. Dictionary work comes second, after you have formed a general impression about the meaning of a text. This is because it is necessary to have some idea of the general subject in order to be able to choose the right meaning from among the various possibilities the dictionary will propose.