

HOW TO USE A DICTIONARY

Dictionary is a reference book on a particular subject, the items of which are typically arranged in alphabetical order.

Why are dictionaries important?

You can use a dictionary to look up the meaning of any words that you don't understand. However, there are lots of different types of dictionaries, so which one should you use?

Let's look at some of the different types of dictionaries to see which will be most helpful to you during your studies.

A dictionary is one of the most important tools during your time studying at a university. A good dictionary can help you understand your subject better, improve your communication and improve your grades by making sure you are using words correctly. However, not all dictionaries are the same and if you don't know how to use a dictionary correctly, it could actually teach you the wrong meaning of a word and make it more difficult to get a good grade.

Look at the four different types of dictionary below.

Bilingual dictionary:

A bilingual dictionary is a dictionary that has the word you are looking for **translated into your own language**. A bilingual dictionary usually only has a small amount of information about the word you are looking for but it is easy to understand because it is written in your native language.

Monolingual dictionary:

A monolingual dictionary is **written only in English**. A monolingual dictionary has lots of different information about every word in English. These dictionaries have lots of information about grammar and pronunciation. A monolingual dictionary can sometimes be confusing because it has multiple definitions for every word.

Learner dictionary:

A learner dictionary is similar to a monolingual dictionary because it is only in English and has lots of information about the word you are trying to find. However, a learner dictionary is a little bit easier to use than a standard monolingual dictionary and has **clear examples and simplified language**.

A subject-specific dictionary:

A subject-specific dictionary is similar to a monolingual dictionary but it **does not contain the general meaning of words, only the definitions that are suitable for the specific subject**. Subject-specific dictionaries are very useful when you need to find out how a word is used differently in your subject area but they can be quite difficult to use and might not contain the word you are looking for.

Using a dictionary:

First, decide when to use the dictionary: Before looking up a word, see if you can guess the meaning based on context. Read the whole sentence, and continue to read the whole paragraph to see if you can guess the meaning of the word based on the information that surrounds it. Identify the word's part of speech, if you can, to help you guess the meaning. Look for prefixes and suffixes or root words that point to the meaning. If you are still confused or think you are missing important information, now is the time to take out the dictionary.

Second, decide which type of dictionary to use: Online dictionaries have the advantage of being free, portable, and easily accessible. However, there are several different types of dictionaries available.

Third, understand how a dictionary is organized: Online dictionaries allow you to type the word into a search bar to find an entry. Within each entry, you will see the word, its part of speech, its pronunciation, and one or more definitions. Each definition will also usually include a sample sentence to help you determine how the word is used and whether that definition matches how the word is used in the text you are reading.

Last, determine which definition is the correct definition: If a word has several definitions, first identify which part of speech is appropriate for the word based on the context. Then look for word combinations that may appear in your text.