

Shorter Oxford English Dictionary

By Angus Stevenson

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From the beginning, the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary was intended to be an abridgement of the full Oxford English Dictionary. The first editor, William Little, was appointed in 1902. He worked on it until his death in 1922, after which the dictionary was completed by H. W. Fowler, Jessie Coulson, and C. T. Onions. The First Edition was published in 1933, in two volumes.

The Second Edition, published in 1936, contained about 3,000 revisions and additions. The Third Edition (1944) contained an appendix of addenda and corrigenda, and this edition was reprinted several times with corrections and additions, the most significant being in 1973, with enlarged addenda (now running to over 70 pages) and a major revision of all the etymologies.

The New Shorter was prepared under the editorship of Lesley Brown 1980-1993. It was the first complete revision of the dictionary, being in fact not so much an overhaul of the existing text as a reabridgement of the OED and its Supplements. The Fifth Edition was published in 2002, and reverted to the name Shorter Oxford English Dictionary to emphasize the link between this 2-volume dictionary and the original 20-volume OED.

The Sixth Edition of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary provides a complete update of this unique reference work. Based on the 20-volume Oxford English Dictionary, the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary contains an incredible one-third of the coverage of the Oxford English Dictionary, is just one-tenth of the size, and includes all words in current English from 1700 to the present day, plus the vocabulary of Shakespeare, the Bible and other major works in English from before 1700.

The new edition, with a new introductory essay by language expert David Crystal on the History of English, includes 2,500 new words and senses, plus thousands of antedatings of existing words, drawing on the huge ongoing research project for the Oxford English Dictionary and the wealth of information on language in use provided by the Oxford English Corpus. In addition, the work includes many new quotations from recent authors, a refreshed design, and a complete review of spelling forms and defining vocabulary, making it the most authoritative reference work available for both modern and historical English.

For scholars and everyone with a serious interest in the English language, the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary is an unrivalled resource, providing a unique description of the historical development of the language together with excellent coverage of current English. The Sixth Edition showcases the best of the traditional strengths of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, while bringing it up to date in its scholarship and research, in the design and layout, and in its treatment of the changing face of English.

- Contains more than 600,000 words, phrases, and definitions, with coverage of language from the entire English-speaking world, from North America and the UK to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and the Caribbean
- Fully updated with 2,500 new words and meanings based on the ongoing research programme of Oxford Dictionaries and the Oxford English Corpus
- Contains all the vocabulary current in general English from 1700 to the present day, as well as earlier major literary works, including Shakespeare, Milton's poetry, the Authorized Version of the Bible, and Spenser's Faerie Queene
- Excellent coverage of all types of English encompassing slang, dialect words, technical, historical, and literary terms, and rare and obsolete words
- Contains over 80,000 quotations illustrating words in use throughout the centuries and thousands of newly discovered antedatings based on the ongoing research for the OED
- A never-before-published, introductory essay by the eminent language commentator David Crystal on the History of English provides a stimulating insight into the development of the English language
- Completely refreshed design and layout highlights the links between meanings and quotations for ease of use and aesthetic appeal

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
In hardcover it takes up two thick volumes, but on CD-ROM you get the same 7.5 million words of text (with half a million definitions and 83,000 quotations) on a thin compact disc. The computerized *New SOED* is a great pleasure. It readily accomplishes the simple task of looking up a word, providing definition, usage, and simple etymology. But the program also searches by anagram and by rhyme, by quotation and by etymology. Perusing the headword group is like flipping the pages. In this fashion, I ran across "nesh" (soft--in consistency, mind, or morals), "convell" (refute completely) and "xoanon" (primitive carved statue of a deity). My Scrabble game is getting less nesh all the time. --*Stephanie Gold*

From Library Journal
The contents of this disc match that of its print counterpart of the same name (edited by Lesley Brown, 1997). Having said that, it's hard to believe this is a "shorter" dictionary: there are 7.5 million words on the disc, 500,000 definitions, and 83,000 quotations to illustrate meanings in context. You can approach these words in four ways: simple search (type in your word for a definition), index search (to look for headwords, derivatives, abbreviations, phrases and compound words, uses and references, and other word forms), full-text search (to search all text, etymological text, definitions, or quotations), and special search (to search for anagrams, rhymes, and phonetics). It may take a bit of hunting under those four groups to find a form-specific search that suits, but how remarkable that Oxford has made it possible within just two levels of looking. Nice features include two wildcards (* and ?) that work at the beginning, end, or middle of words, as well as a link feature that lets you use the dictionary within several word processors such as MS Word for Windows 6 and 7, WordPerfect 6.0 and 6.1, and Ami Pro 3.1. Bottom Line: What's extraordinary about this disc is how well it will serve all types of users, from those with the most casual reference question to the scholarly student of the English language. It is highly recommended for all types of libraries and personal collections.
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Review
`Review from previous edition The Shorter demands a shelf, but one very close to the desk of anyone who cares about words.
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Daily Telegraph

`The Shorter is the Matterhorn to the great OED's Everest - elegant, awesome and marvelous to behold, differing only in size. A stupendous achievement.
'
Simon Winchester, author of The Professor and the Madman

`It may be difficult to carry, but not to read
'
Erich Segal, Times Literary Supplement

`It must be difficult trying to come up with a bright marketing technique to sell the fifth edition of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary ...but the OUP seems to have managed it. On the box housing the two volumes of this mighty enterprise is a picture of a white-bearded gentleman in a
cloak who, at first blush, appears to be J. K. Rowling's Albus Dumbledore. However, it is Sir James Murray

(1837-1915), the first Editor of the real, 21-volume Oxford English Dictionary, of which the Shorter is an honest abridgement. More than half a million definitions are presented in clear type,
set big enough for all but the most long-sighted.
'

Chris Campling, Times

`. . . truly a dictionary of global English.
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Sydney Morning Herald

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US News and World Reports

`The Shorter is a mine of information'
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`. . . astonishingly good value . . . the new SOED is all that one would expect of it.
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Keith Waterhouse, Daily Mail

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Frank Devine, The Australian

`The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary redefines hip.
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The New York Post

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