

# Word for Word

## The dictionary: Beyond basic definitions



Often, dictionaries are thought of only as a resource to learn the definition of a word, but dictionaries offer many uses. Dictionaries can be used as a reference for the meaning, spelling, part of speech, pronunciation, plural or past tense forms, and synonyms of a word.

Overall, as a general dictionary, the [online Merriam-Webster dictionary](#)<sup>1</sup> is a good choice because it uses American English spellings, is free and readily accessible, and offers synonyms, example sentences, and pronunciation recordings (along with phonetic pronunciations). However, because some words are spelled differently in American English and British English (e.g., “leukemia” vs “leukaemia,” “apologize” vs “apologise,” and “catalog” vs “catalogue”), the [Oxford English Dictionary](#)<sup>2</sup> is a good choice if your target journal prefers British English spelling.

Although the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary and the *Oxford English Dictionary* are good general references, they may lack robust

medical definitions. In these cases, *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary*<sup>3</sup> and *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*<sup>4</sup> are two dictionaries that may be more useful. *Dorland's Medical Dictionary* has illustrations of some terms, and the online, paid versions of these dictionaries offer recorded examples of word pronunciations. The Research Medical Library offers online access to *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*.

## References

1. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*. 2021. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>. Accessed August 27, 2021.
2. *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2021. <https://www.oed.com/>. Accessed August 27, 2021.
3. *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary*. 2021. <https://www.dorlandsonline.com/dorland/home>. Accessed August 27, 2021.
4. *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. 2021. <https://stedmansonline.com/index.aspx>. Accessed August 27, 2021.

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