

# What's in an entry?

## Introduction

If you suspect that your students lack confidence in using a monolingual dictionary, this lesson offers an introduction – or a refresher – that will help them to understand the structure of a dictionary entry so that they can find the information they need quickly and effectively. The activities will enhance students' dictionary skills by making them more familiar with the format of a dictionary and the terminology used, and by showing them the range of grammatical and lexical information contained within a dictionary entry. The first activity helps students to learn what the abbreviations and symbols in the dictionary mean. In the second activity, they learn about the different parts of the entry. For the third activity, they use the parts of an entry to build a complete entry. The fourth activity, which requires students to use the dictionary to answer sets of questions about various entries, enables them to put their newly acquired knowledge about the different components of a dictionary entry into practice.

## Procedure

- Aim: to enhance students' dictionary skills
- Timing: 1 hour
- Resources: *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th edition* (book, app or website)  
copies of Worksheets 1 and 2 (one per student)  
copies of the labels on the *labels* sheet (one set of cut-up labels per pair of students, or, if you would like students to move around the room for this activity, one cut-up, enlarged copy)  
copies of Worksheet 3 (one per pair of students)

## Preparation

- Make a photocopy of Worksheets 1 and 2 for each student.
- Photocopy and cut up sets of labels from the labels sheet for pairs of students to use at their desks. Alternatively, if you would like students to move around the room for this activity, enlarge one set of labels to A3 size, cut them up and stick them in different places around the classroom.
- Make enough copies of Worksheet 3 to distribute among pairs of students.

## Activities

### Lead-in (5 mins)

- Discuss how students in your class usually search for information about new words (e.g. dictionaries, search engines, grammar sites, etc.).
- Ask how regularly they use dictionaries (online or print versions) and what type of information they are usually searching for when they look up a word.
- Find out what students find difficult about using a dictionary. If necessary, prompt them by asking whether they understand when they come across **sb** or **PHR V** in a dictionary.
- Explain that the students are going to learn about dictionary symbols and abbreviations, and the different parts that make up an entry, so that using a dictionary will be easier in future. They will also practise using the dictionary to find out specific information about various entries.

### Activity 1 (15 mins)

- Elicit and write up a few common abbreviations and symbols used in dictionary entries.
- Distribute a copy of *Worksheet 1* to each student. Individually, students fill in as many answers as they can.
- Give out copies of the dictionary and ask the students to look at the abbreviations and symbols page in the front of the dictionary. Discuss the answers referring to this, checking understanding of terms like 'intransitive' if necessary.

#### Key

1 adjective 2 adverb 3 British English 4 conjunction 5 derivative(s) section 6 in phrasal verbs, shows that the object may come either before or after the particle 7 intransitive verb 8 idiom(s) section 9 Oxford 3000 word 10 North American English 11 new part of speech 12 opposite 13 phrasal verb(s) section 14 preposition 15 somebody 16 something 17 synonym 18 transitive verb 19 uncountable noun 20 shows where a word can be broken 21 Oxford 5000 word 22 OPAL word or phrase 23 CEFR level (A1)

### Activity 2 (15 mins)

- Write **What's in a dictionary entry?** on the board. Elicit from students what they expect to find when they look up a word in a dictionary (e.g. grammar information, parts of speech, phrasal verbs, idioms, pronunciation, etc.).
- Write the word **gum** on the board. In pairs, students discuss and write down in note form what they know about the word (e.g. meanings, parts of speech, pronunciation, etc.) without the aid of reference materials.
- Elicit this information and write keywords on the board.

### Activity 3 (15 mins)

- Distribute copies of *Worksheet 2* to each student. Provide a set of labels for pairs of students to use at their desks. Alternatively, you may have chosen to stick one set of labels around the room before the start of the lesson so that students can move around the room completing this activity.
- Students complete *Worksheet 2* using the information on the labels.
- Ensure that each pair of students has access to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th edition*.
- As you go through the answers with the class, go through the questions and points below to ensure that students are able to interpret the information given in the entry and encourage them to refer to the dictionaries to see the information in context.

### Answers and discussion

- (a)  $g\Delta m$
- How do we pronounce this upside-down V? [*demonstrate pronunciation*]
  - Does this word have the same vowel sound as **cup** or **put**? [*cup*]
- (b) C, usually pl.
- What does the C label mean? [*When used with this meaning, the word is **countable** i.e. it can be used in the plural or with a/an.*]
  - Why do you think that this is usually plural? [*We have two gums and often refer to both of them.*]
  - In meaning 4, we have the sense **chewing gum**. Look at the grammar label here and decide which of these sentences are correct: a) *He was chewing a gum.* b) *He was chewing gum.* c) *He was chewing some gum.* [*b and c. This sense is **uncountable** and therefore we cannot say **a gum** or **gums**, but we can say **gum** or **some gum**.*]
- (c) *gum disease*
- Can you find another example in the **noun** section of this entry? [*fruit gums*]
- (d) a fairly hard, coloured sweet that tastes of fruit and that you chew
- Definitions tell you the meanings. They often use words like **process**, **substance**, **act**, **state**, or **quality**. Which of these is used to define the **gum** that is produced by a tree? [*substance*]
- (e) by gum!
- Idioms have meanings that you often can't guess from the meanings of the individual words. If an expression doesn't seem to make sense, check the idioms section of the entry to see if it has a special meaning, like this. Here there is more information about the phrase. Would a young person be likely to use this expression? [*No – the expression is labelled **old-fashioned**.*]
- (f) **verb**
- Lots of words have more than one part of speech. **Gum**, for example, is both a noun and a verb. If you use the verb in the past, what must you remember about the spelling? [*The past tense is **gummed** - the (-mm-) tells you that this is one of the verbs*

*where you double the final consonant to form the present and past participles, and the past tense.*]

- (g) ~sth (down)
- Do the two grammatical constructions here show that you can use the verb without an object? [*No, you always gum **something**. You can **gum it to something else**, **gum it** or **gum it down**, but you must have an object.*]
- (h) *A large address label was gummed to the package.*
- Does this example relate to the first or the second part of the definition? [the second: to stick two things together with glue]
- (i) ,gum sth↔'up
- Look at the arrow in this phrasal verb. Does it mean that we can say **gum up the engine**, **gum the engine up** or both? [*Both. When the object is a noun, it can go before or after the particle up.*]
- (j) informal
- When would it **not** be appropriate to use this phrasal verb? [*in a formal letter, in a report, in an essay, etc. – it is **informal***]

### Activity 4 (10 mins)

- Distribute *Worksheet 3* to pairs of students.
- Students use the dictionaries to find the words described on the worksheet.
- This can also be set as a follow-up activity for homework, if preferred.

### Key

1 both 2 modal 3 paltry 4 spark up sth 5 rappel 6 childish/childishness

### Starter idea for next lesson (5 mins)

- Write the following abbreviations and symbols on the board:

- 1 NAmE
- 2 PHR V
- 3 sb
- 4 SYN
- 5 T
- 6 adv.
- 7 C

- Individually, students write down what each abbreviation or symbol means.

### Key

1 North American English 2 phrasal verb 3 somebody 4 synonym  
5 transitive 6 adverb 7 countable

# Worksheet 1

## What's in an entry?

How many of these abbreviations and symbols from the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* can you identify? Write your answers in the column on the right.

1 <i>adj.</i>	
2 <i>adv.</i>	
3 <i>BrE</i>	
4 <i>conj.</i>	
5 ►	
6 ↔	
7 [I]	
8 <b>IDM</b>	
9 ⓘ	
10 <i>NAmE</i>	
11 ■	
12 <b>OPP</b>	

13 <b>PHRV</b>	
14 <i>prep.</i>	
15 <i>sb</i>	
16 <i>sth</i>	
17 <b>SYN</b>	
18 [T]	
19 [U]	
20 •	
21 ⓘ+	
22 <b>O</b>	
23 <b>A1</b>	

## Worksheet 2

### What's in an entry?

**gum** / (a)

pronunciation

/ noun, verb

grammar information

■ **noun** 1 [ (b) ] either of the areas of FLESH in the mouth to which the teeth are attached: (c)

example

2 [U] a sticky substance produced by some types of tree 3 [U] a type of GLUE used for sticking light things together, such as paper 4 [U] = CHEWING GUM 5 [C] (d)

definition

*fruit gums*

idiom

**IDM**

(e) (old-fashioned, informal) used to show surprise

grammatical construction

part of speech

(f) (-mm-) ~ A to B | (g) (rather old-fashioned)

to spread GLUE on the surface of sth; to stick two things together with GLUE: (h)

example

phrasal verb

**PHRV**

(i) [usually passive]

(j) ( ) to cover or fill sth with a sticky substance so that it stops moving or working as it should

register

## Worksheet 2 labels

ɡʌm

C, usually pl.

**ˌgʌm sth ↔ ˈʌp**

**verb**

**by gum!**

**~ sth (down)**

*gum disease*

*informal*

a fairly hard, coloured sweet that tastes of fruit and that you CHEW

*A large address label was gummed to the package.*

## Worksheet 3

### What's in an entry?

#### Use your dictionary to find out:

1. ... whether the verb **aspire** is transitive, intransitive or both.
2. ... which other entry you can look at in order to find out more information about the word **dare**.
3. ... a synonym for the word **meagre**.
4. ... a phrasal verb using **spark**.
5. ... the American word for **abseil**.
6. ... a noun that is a derivative of the adjective **childish**.

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