

How Words Make It into the Dictionary

1. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words from the text with their meanings before you read.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. lexicographer | a) connected with language or the study of language |
| 2. ambitious | b) a person who writes and edits dictionaries |
| 3. evolve | c) something that is very popular for a short time, then forgotten |
| 4. linguistic | d) requiring a lot of effort, time, or determination to achieve |
| 5. longevity | e) proof or facts that show something is true |
| 6. fad | f) to develop and change gradually over time |
| 7. evidence | g) lasting for a long time; not disappearing quickly |

2. Reading: The Story of Words

Read the text about how new words enter the dictionary and answer the questions below.

The story of words

Have you ever wondered who decides which words belong in an English dictionary? Is there a secret council of language experts meeting in a hidden room, inventing new vocabulary every morning? The short answer is: no, not at all!

The history of modern English dictionaries began hundreds of years ago. One of the most famous projects, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), was started in the middle of the 19th century. The original goal was ambitious: the editors wanted to collect every single English word in existence and explain its history and meaning. However, as the project grew, they quickly realized a fundamental truth: language is not static. It is a living, breathing entity that constantly evolves. As human society changes, we invent new technologies, discover new ideas, and adopt new lifestyles. Naturally, we need new words to describe this changing world.

So, how does a brand-new word actually make its way into a modern dictionary today?

Contrary to popular belief, lexicographers—the scientists who research and write dictionaries—do not invent words themselves. Instead, they act like linguistic detectives. Every day, they analyse millions of words from books, newspapers, scientific journals, podcasts, social media posts, and online forums. They are constantly looking for evidence of how real people use language in their daily lives.

However, if a cool new slang word appears in a viral video overnight, it does not immediately get a spot in the dictionary. Lexicographers follow a strict set of criteria before accepting a candidate:

- **Widespread use:** The word must be used and understood by a large group of people across different regions, not just by a single group of friends, an individual school, or inside one family.
- **Longevity:** The word must demonstrate staying power. If a trendy word disappears after a few weeks or months, it is considered a short-lived fad and will be ignored.

- **Sustained meaning:** The word needs to have a clear and consistent meaning that people agree on.

In recent decades, the digital revolution and social media have accelerated this process tremendously. Words like *selfie*, *binge-watch*, *unplug*, *crowdfund*, and *fake news* entered our daily language at incredible speed. Once lexicographers are convinced that a word meets all criteria, they draft a clear, original definition, select real-world example sentences, and officially publish the entry.

The next time you use a new piece of slang while chatting with your classmates, pay close attention! If enough people adopt it and keep using it over time, your favourite phrase might just become part of official English history.

A) Multiple Choice

Choose the correct answer (a, b, c or d).

1. What did the creators of the Oxford English Dictionary realize in the 19th century?

- a) English would soon be replaced by other European languages.
- b) Language is constantly changing over time.
- c) Writing a complete dictionary takes only a couple of months.
- d) New words should only be added if approved by schools.

2. Where do lexicographers look for potential new dictionary words?

- a) They only analyse old, classical literature from the past.
- b) They invent them during weekly editorial team meetings.
- c) They examine various media, including books, podcasts, and social media.
- d) They ask students to submit new words via email.

3. Why are viral slang words often NOT added to the dictionary immediately?

- a) They might be short-lived and forgotten quickly.
- b) Lexicographers are legally forbidden from watching viral videos.
- c) Slang words are never allowed in official dictionaries.
- d) It takes at least fifty years to process a new word.

4. What has speeded up the creation and spread of new words in recent years?

- a) Modern dictionary printing techniques in publishing houses.
- b) Digital technology and the rise of social media platforms.
- c) Strict new grammar rules introduced by English teachers.
- d) The international radio broadcast industry.

B) True, False, First four words

Read the statements below. Decide whether they are True (T) or False (F). Then justify your answer by writing down the **first four words** of the sentence that contains the justification.

Statements	T	F	First four words
1 Language stays the same over time.			
2 Lexicographers create new words when language changes.			
3 To be included in a dictionary, a word must be used in multiple places.			
4 Lexicographers discard new words if they disappear after a short time.			
5 Modern technology has slowed down the way new words enter our language.			

C) Open Questions (Short Answers)

Answer the questions in 1–2 complete sentences based on the text.

1. What are the three main criteria a word must meet before making it into a dictionary?
2. How has the way we create new words changed compared to the 19th century?

3. Over to You! (Speaking / Partner Work)

Work with a partner and discuss the following questions:

- Think of a word in English or German that didn't exist when your parents were your age. What does it mean?
- Do you think dictionaries are still important in the age of Google Translate and AI? Why or why not?

Funny and Unusual English Idioms

Did you know?

Have you ever heard someone say, “*It’s raining cats and dogs*”? Of course, fluffy pets aren’t actually falling from the sky! English is full of **idioms** – expressions where the whole phrase means something completely different from the individual words. Taking idioms literally can lead to very funny misunderstandings!

1. Vocabulary Match: What Does It Actually Mean?

Match the funny English idioms (1–6) with their correct meanings (a–f).

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. To spill the beans | a) Good luck! (often used before a performance) |
| 2. A piece of cake | b) Something that is very easy to do |
| 3. To hold your horses | c) To be looking for something in the wrong place |
| 4. Barking up the wrong tree | d) To be in the exact same difficult situation as someone |
| 5. To be in the same boat | e) To wait a moment or slow down |
| 6. To break a leg | f) To share a secret, often by accident |

2. Practice: Idioms in Action

Complete the sentences using the correct idiom from exercise 1 in the correct form.

1. Don’t worry about tomorrow’s English test; you studied all weekend, so it will be _____ !
2. “I’m going on stage for the school play in five minutes!” – “Good luck, _____ !”
3. We were planning a surprise party for Sarah, but Thomas accidentally _____ during lunch.
4. All students have a lot of homework this week, so we are all _____ .
5. Hey, _____ ! We can’t leave for the cinema until everyone has bought their ticket.
6. If you think I stole your pen, you are _____ – I wasn’t even in the classroom!

3. Cultural Comparison: English vs. German

Connecting cultures! Match the English idioms (A–D) with their German equivalents (1–4) and write down the word.

English Idioms:

A) To be packed like _____

B) To sleep like a _____

C) To feel under the _____

D) To cost an _____ and a leg

German Equivalents:

1. Ein Vermögen kosten (*literally: to cost a fortune*)
2. Zusammengepfercht wie die Sardinen in der Büchse (*literally: to squeeze like oil-sardines*)
3. Nicht ganz auf dem Damm sein (*literally: to feel a bit unwell*)
4. Wie ein Murmeltier schlafen (*literally: to sleep like a marmot*)

4. Creative Task: Two-Sentence Micro-Stories

Can you tell a whole story using only two sentences? Challenge accepted!

Instructions:

1. Select **two different idioms** from Task 1 or Task 3.
2. Write a mini-story that consists of **exactly two sentences**. Both idioms must fit naturally into the story!

Example:

*I thought studying for the English exam would be a **piece of cake**, but I woke up feeling a bit **under the weather**. Luckily, my best friend helped me revise, and we both passed!*

UK vs. US: Two Countries, One Language?

💡 Did you know?

George Bernard Shaw once famously said that Britain and America are “*two nations divided by a common language*.” While British and American speakers understand each other easily, they often use completely different words, spellings, and pronunciations for everyday things!

1. Vocabulary Match: Same Thing, Different Word

British and American English often use different terms for the same object. Match the British English words (1–8) with their American English equivalents (a–h).

British English (UK)	American English (US)
1. biscuit	a) elevator
2. chips	b) trunk
3. flat	c) cookie
4. lift	d) apartment
5. lorry	e) fries
6. boot (of a car)	f) truck
7. trainers	g) vacation
8. holiday	h) sneakers

2. Spelling Detectives: Find the Pattern

Notice how the spelling differs between UK and US English! Look at the examples in the table and complete the rules.

Word Pair (UK vs. US)	Spelling Rule
UK: colour / favourite US: color / favorite	Words ending in – _____ in UK English are spelled with – _____ in US English.
UK: centre / theatre US: center / theater	Words ending in – _____ in UK English are spelled with – _____ in US English.

Word Pair (UK vs. US)	Spelling Rule
UK: organise / realise US: organize / realize	Verbs ending in – _____ in UK English are often spelled with – _____ in US English.

3. Practice: The American Tourist in London

Read the short text. The tourist is using American words in London! Replace the **bold American words** with their **British English equivalents**.

Yesterday, Sam took a trip to London. He stayed in a small **(1)**

apartment _____ near the city centre. In the morning, he put on his **(2)**

sneakers _____ and walked to a nearby café. He ordered a cup of tea and a

chocolate **(3) cookie** _____. Afterwards, he took the **(4)**

elevator _____ to the top floor of a famous museum to enjoy the view. In the

evening, he decided to buy some **(5) fries** _____ from a local pub before

heading back.

4. Interactive Challenge: Spot the Mistakes (Partner Work)

Work with a partner. Read the sentences below. Each sentence mixes UK and US vocabulary/spelling. Rewrite them so they are **completely British** or **completely American**.

1. My favourite snack on vacation is a biscuit.

- **100% UK:** _____.
- **100% US:** _____.

2. We organized the luggage in the boot of the truck.

- **100% UK:** _____.
- **100% US:** _____.

Invent Your Own Word! (Neologisms and Blend Words)

Did you know?

Language changes constantly, especially through **blend words** (also called portmanteaus). A blend word is created by merging two existing words and their meanings into a brand-new term. For example: **brunch** = **breakfast** + **lunch**!

1. Language Analysis: Deconstructing Blend Words

Blend words combine two root words. Analyse the bold neologisms in the sentences below. Identify the two original words that were merged to create each term and explain what the new word means in your own words.

1. "The school hosted an **edutainment** event where students learned physics through VR gaming."

- **Root words:** _____ + _____
- **Meaning:** _____

2. "Before posting on the school forum, please make sure you follow standard **netiquette**."

- **Root words:** _____ + _____
- **Meaning:** _____

3. "Late last night, the TV station broadcasted an hour-long **infomercial** for kitchen tools."

- **Root words:** _____ + _____
- **Meaning:** _____

4. "Bakery shops in London are famous for serving delicious **cronuts** every morning."

- **Root words:** _____ + _____
- **Meaning:** _____

2. Vocabulary Matching: Modern Neologisms

Match the modern English blend words (1–5) with their correct definitions (a–e).

Blend Word	Definition
1. Staycation	a) Being angry or irritable as a result of feeling hungry
2. Hangry	b) A non-alcoholic cocktail made with fresh fruit juice and soda
3. Glamping	c) A holiday spent at home or in your local region rather than traveling abroad
4. Mocktail	d) Outdoor camping equipped with luxury amenities and modern comforts
5. Chillax	e) To calm down and relax, leaving stress behind

3. Sentence Completion: Context Practice

Complete the sentences using the appropriate blend word from exercises 1 or 2 in the correct form.

1. After walking through the city centre for five hours without lunch, David got extremely _____ and started complaining.
2. Instead of spending thousands of Euros flying to Asia, our family opted for a peaceful _____ in the Alps.
3. Don't worry so much about the upcoming English presentation—just take a deep breath and _____!
4. Since I am the driver tonight, I will order a refreshing strawberry _____ at the bar.
5. Online bullying and aggressive comments violate our class group's _____.

4. Creative Task: Become a Lexicographer! (Partner Work)

Now it's your turn to invent a new word for modern life! Combine two existing words to name a phenomenon, habit, or object that doesn't have an official name yet.

Need inspiration?

- *sleeping + working* = **slorking** (falling asleep while pretending to study/work)
- *texting + walking* = **swalking** (bumping into things while looking at your phone)
- *maths + agony* = **mathagony** (the extreme struggle of difficult homework)

Your Official Dictionary Entry:

Headword (New Word): _____

Original Words Merged: _____ + _____

Part of Speech: (*noun / verb / adjective*) _____

Definition: _____

Example Sentence: _____

Key: How Words Make It into the Dictionary

1. Vocabulary Preview:

1 – b | 2 – d | 3 – f | 4 – a | 5 – g | 6 – c | 7 – e

2. Comprehension Checks:

A) Multiple Choice:

1 b, 2 c, 3 a, 4 b

B) True or False and First four words:

1: F – *It is a living...*

2: F – *Contrary to popular belief...*

3: T – *The word must be...*

4: T – *If a trendy word...*

5: F – *In recent decades, the...*

C) Open Questions:

1. *The three main criteria are widespread use, longevity (staying power), and sustained meaning.*
2. *Due to digital technology and social media, new words are created and spread much faster today than in the 19th century.*

Key: Funny and unusual English idioms

1. Vocabulary Match:

1 – f | 2 – b | 3 – e | 4 – c | 5 – d | 6 – a

2. Practice: Idioms in Action:

1. *a piece of cake*
2. *break a leg*
3. *spilled the beans*
4. *in the same boat*
5. *hold your horses*
6. *barking up the wrong tree*

3. Cultural Comparison:

A) *sardines* → 2

B) *log* → 4

C) *weather* → 3

D) *arm* → 1

Key: UK vs. US: Two Countries, One Language?

1. Vocabulary Match:

1 – c | 2 – e | 3 – d | 4 – a | 5 – f | 6 – b | 7 – h | 8 – g

2. Spelling Detectives:

- Rule 1: **-our / -or**
- Rule 2: **-re / -er**
- Rule 3: **-ise / -ize**

3. Practice: The American Tourist in London:

1. *flat*
2. *trainers*
3. *biscuit*
4. *lift*
5. *chips*

4. Interactive Challenge:

1. 100% UK: My favourite snack on holiday is a biscuit. I **100% US:** My favorite snack on vacation is a cookie.

2. 100% UK: We organised the luggage in the boot of the lorry. I **100% US:** We organized the luggage in the trunk of the truck.

Key: Invent Your Own Word! (Neologisms and Blend Words)

1. Language Analysis:

1. *education + entertainment* | Meaning: Educational content presented in an entertaining format.
2. *internet + etiquette* | Meaning: Rules for polite and acceptable behavior online.
3. *information + commercial* | Meaning: A long television commercial that gives information about a product.
4. *croissant + doughnut* | Meaning: A pastry that combines the layered texture of a croissant with the shape of a doughnut.

2. Vocabulary Matching:

1 – c | 2 – a | 3 – d | 4 – b | 5 – e

3. Sentence Completion:

1. *hangry*
2. *staycation*
3. *chillax*
4. *mocktail*
5. *netiquette*