

Understanding and Using a Dictionary

Here is some detailed information about using a writer's best friend: the dictionary.

Abridged and Unabridged

Dictionaries are divided into two large categories: **abridged** and **unabridged**.

1. Abridged. An **abridged** dictionary is smaller than an **unabridged** one and contains less information.
2. Unabridged. An **unabridged** dictionary is huge and contains practically everything one would want to know about words and about several other items.

Types and Styles

Dictionaries come in several types or styles:

Paperback. These are small, abridged dictionaries that are easy to carry. They have paper or cardboard covers and are popular with students because of their convenience.

Desktop. A little larger than paperbacks, these dictionaries have hard covers and look good sitting open on large desks, hence their name. They contain more information than paperbacks.

Specialized. Some dictionaries “specialize” in words or terms associated with only one area. For example, there are music dictionaries, animal dictionaries, sports dictionaries, and so forth.

The guide words are the words in the extreme upper left and right-hand corner of each page. These words act as “guides” to tell the user the range of words appearing on that page.

An entry is the term applied to all the information given for each word that is defined by the dictionary. The “entry” is everything that appears from start to finish for each word in the dictionary.

Eight Services Provided for Each Word

There are up to eight services that the dictionary provides for each word. They include the following:

1. Spelling
2. Syllabication
3. Pronunciation
4. Part of Speech
5. Etymology
6. Definition
7. Synonym/antonym
8. Cross reference