Dictionary Resources:

How find a great dictionary

How to pick the best dictionary for you

- Consider what you need it for
  - Some dictionaries are specialized (i.e. medical dictionaries, legal dictionaries, etc.)
  - American English dictionaries are usually more helpful for American English speakers
    - American English is different than British English in both pronunciation and word usage
      - Some words have different meanings in American and British English (ex. Biscuit in British English is a cookie in American English)

Abridged v. Unabridged Dictionaries

- Unabridged: the FULL dictionary
  - It contains almost every word in the English language
  - They are HUGE
  - They are not always as current as abridged dictionaries (because it takes years to update them)
  - They contain even old or archaic words
  - They are very expensive
Abridged v. Unabridged Dictionaries

- Abridged: the shortened version of a dictionary
- Abridged dictionaries are smaller
- They have fewer words
- The words they do have are more commonly used and up to date
- They are usually cheaper
- They are more practical
- They tend to be easier to use

What to look for in a good dictionary in general

- Up to date
  - Words that are currently being used
- Easy definitions
  - Some dictionaries have easier definitions than others
- Identifies parts of speech
  - Some dictionaries tell you what part of speech a word is and gives a list of other forms of the word
- Identifies whether a word is formal/informal

What to look for in a good print dictionary

- Examples of a word’s use
  - Some dictionaries use the words in a sentence or give other examples (i.e. pictures)
- Easy navigation
  - Some dictionaries make it very easy to look up words and other information
- Pronunciation guide*
  - This makes pronouncing new words very easy
Pronunciation Guide*

- Pronunciation guides may vary from dictionary to dictionary
  - The symbols may be different but the sounds are usually the same
  - American dictionaries show American pronunciations
  - Some dictionaries show both American and British pronunciations

The Pronunciation Guide (IPA)

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Street

- January /ˈdʒænəri/
What to look for in a good online dictionary

- They usually have many similarities to print dictionaries
- They are usually just online versions of print dictionaries
  - [http://www.merriam-webster.com/](http://www.merriam-webster.com/) is a good example
- Most have an audio pronunciation of the word
- The may or may not be free

What to look for in a good online dictionary

- Easy to read definitions
- A thesaurus
- A site that is easy to navigate
- Grammar and/or spelling guides
- Lots of extra features*
  - i.e. word of the day, encyclopedia, downloads etc.
  - These features are not always free

Where to find a good dictionary

- The best places:
  - Borders, Barns & Noble, and Amazon
  - The book store on campus
- Online*
  - Not every online dictionary is a good dictionary
The Longman’s Dictionary of American English
- It uses 50 words or less to define a given word
- It is good for both English speakers and English learners
- It has a writing and grammar guide
- It has a built-in thesaurus
- It has common American English words and pronunciations
- It tells which part of speech a word is and whether it is formal, informal, or slang

Webster’s New Riverside Dictionary
- It has a good variety of words
- The definitions are not too difficult
- Can be found as part of a package with a thesaurus
- Has a useful pronunciation guide
- Identifies the part of speech of each word