

Webster's Contemporary School & Office Thesaurus

Created in Cooperation with the Editors of
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PREFACE

This thesaurus is specially designed for those who want to enlarge their vocabularies and learn more about the rich variety of the English language. We hope and expect that users will readily turn to a dictionary whenever they need a better understanding of the meaning of any word used in the thesaurus.

In creating this thesaurus, the editors have drawn on years of experience with a thesaurus format that is at once easy to use, broad in its scope, and especially helpful to the user in the selection of the right word. We also believe that this thesaurus will prove to be highly useful as a vocabulary builder. We have parted ways with the more traditional approach of presenting long, undifferentiated lists of words that are tied to some topic or intellectual concept. Instead, we present a strictly alphabetical ordering of entries. These entries consist of lists of words that are centered on a specific—and specified—meaning. Main entries consist of lists of synonyms and related words, as well as antonyms and near antonyms whenever applicable. Phrases and idioms that function as synonyms are occasionally offered as well.

The purpose of the differentiated lists is to accommodate the various purposes for which a thesaurus is used. People use a thesaurus generally because they are dissatisfied with the word they already have in mind. They want a different word. The question is: how different?

If users of this thesaurus are trying to avoid a boring repetition of the same word, or are seeking to vary and enrich their vocabulary, then they will wish to select from the list of synonyms a word that shares the same basic meaning as the one they already have but differs from it in suggestion and tone. If they are seeking a word that is different from but still related to what they already have, then they will want to scan the lists of related words for a rewarding journey through the variety of possibilities that English offers.

If users are seeking a word that is to some degree opposite in meaning to what they have, then they will want to consult the lists of antonyms or near antonyms. By specifying the meaning under consideration, and by making distinctions between words that are truly synonymous and those that are only somewhat synonymous, we hope that we have given users the guidance they desire. We believe that this system minimizes the need to guess and to grope.

What makes this thesaurus unique is the content of the separate entries for each and every word appearing in the lists of synonyms. Since a user's search for the right word may start anywhere, the thesaurus is arranged so that any member of a synonym group can serve as the starting point. An entry for a listed synonym consists of a restatement of the meaning common to all the members of the group. A user who happens to use a particular synonym as a starting point should follow the cross-reference to the main entry for the complete listing of synonyms, related words, and any antonyms or near antonyms.

The thesaurus format is intended to encourage and facilitate users in finding the right word, which results in writing of greater precision and clarity. The word *thesaurus* literally means “treasury” in Latin, and we hope that the treasure trove of words contained in these pages will enhance the user's interest in and appreciation of the English language. We urge all users to read carefully the following sections entitled Introduction and Using Your Thesaurus in order to make the most of what the book has to offer. The Introduction contains an informative discussion of what distinguishes a synonym from a related word, an antonym from a near antonym. The section Using Your Thesaurus explains in detail the organization of the thesaurus and discusses the differences between the two basic types of entries. Study of this section is especially important.

The editor has been ably assisted in its composition by the editors Rose Martino Bigelow, Daniel B. Brandon, Adam Groff, Kory L. Stamper, and Deanna Stathis. The entire project was supervised by Madeline L. Novak, and Robert D. Copeland served as editor in charge of production. Stephen J. Perrault devised ways to facilitate the creation of the manuscript electronically. The difficult task of cross-referencing the text was accomplished by Christopher Chapin Connor and Allison S. Crawford. Credit for proofreading the text goes to Ilya A. Davidovich, Donna L. Rickerby, Maria Sansalone, Adrienne M. Scholz, Peter A. Sokolowski, Emily A. Vezina, and Judy Yeh. Michael D. Roundy acted as a consultant on miscellaneous scientific questions. Finally, John M. Morse, Merriam-Webster's President and Publisher, must be acknowledged and thanked for his unflinching support for this thesaurus.

Michael G. Belanger,
Editor

aback *adv* without warning — see UNAWARES

abaft *adv* near, toward, or in the stern of a ship or the tail of an aircraft — see AFT

abaft *prep* at, to, or toward the rear of — see BEHIND 1

abandon *n* carefree freedom from constraint <added spices to the stew with complete *abandon*>

synonyms abandonment, ease, lightheartedness, naturalness, spontaneity, unrestraint

related words ardor, enthusiasm, exuberance, fervor, spirit, warmth, zeal; carelessness, heedlessness, impulsiveness, indiscretion, insouciance, recklessness, thoughtlessness; excess, excessiveness, immoderacy, incontinence, indulgence, intemperance, licentiousness, permissiveness, wantonness, wildness

near antonyms embarrassment, reserve, reticence, self-consciousness, uneasiness; inhibition, repression, self-restraint, suppression; carefulness, discreetness, discretion, heedfulness; discipline, self-control, self-discipline, willpower

antonyms constraint, restraint

abandon *vb* to cause to remain behind — see LEAVE 1

abandoned *adj* left unoccupied or unused <Marlene avoided walking past the *abandoned* house, with its broken windows and sagging porch>

synonyms derelict, deserted, disused, forgotten, forsaken, rejected, vacated

related words ignored, neglected, unattended, untended; castaway, cast-off, discarded, jettisoned, junked; desolate, godforsaken, miserable, shabby, wretched; empty, idle, vacant

near antonyms reclaimed, recovered, redeemed, rescued, retrieved, salvaged, saved; reconditioned, rehabilitated, restored; reepled

abandonment *n* 1 carefree freedom from constraint — see ABANDON

2 the act of abandoning — see DERELICTION 1

abase *vb* 1 to lower in character or dignity — see DEBASE 1

2 to reduce to a lower standing in one's own eyes or in others' eyes — see HUMBLE

abash *vb* to throw into a state of self-conscious distress — see EMBARRASS 1

abashment *n* the emotional state of being made self-consciously uncomfortable — see EMBARRASSMENT 1

abate *vb* 1 to grow less in scope or intensity especially gradually — see DECREASE 2

2 to make smaller in amount, volume, or extent — see DECREASE 1

abatement *n* 1 something that is or may be subtracted — see DEDUCTION 1

2 the amount by which something is lessened — see DECREASE

abbey *n* a residence for men under religious vows — see MONASTERY

abbreviate *vb* to make less in extent or duration — see SHORTEN

abbreviation *n* a shortened version of a written work — see ABRIDGMENT

abdicate *vb* to give up (as a position of authority) formally <the revolutionary government forced Nicholas II to *abdicate* the Russian throne>

synonyms abnegate, cede, relinquish, renounce, resign, step down (from), surrender

related words abjure, deny, disavow, disclaim, disown, waive; forsake, give up, hand over, yield; abandon, desert, quit, vacate

near antonyms appropriate, arrogate, assume, claim, confiscate; seize, take over, usurp, wrest; defend, guard, protect, safeguard, secure

abdomen *n* the part of the body between the chest and the pelvis — see STOMACH

abduct *vb* to carry a person away by unlawful force or against his or her will — see KIDNAP

aberrant *adj* 1 being out of the ordinary — see EXCEPTIONAL

2 departing from some accepted standard of what is normal — see DEVIANT

aberration *n* a serious mental disorder that prevents one from living a safe and normal life — see INSANITY 1

abet *vb* 1 to cause or encourage the development of — see INCITE 1

2 to provide (someone) with what is useful or necessary to achieve an end — see HELP 1

abettor *also abetter* *n* 1 one associated with another in wrongdoing — see ACCOMPLICE

2 someone associated with another to give assistance or moral support — see ALLY

abeyance *n* a state of temporary inactivity <our weekend plans were held in *abeyance* until we could get a weather forecast>

synonyms doldrums, dormancy, latency, quiescence, suspense, suspension

related words inaction, inertia, inertness, motionlessness; impasse, standstill; coma, hibernation, hypnosis, repose, rest, sleep, slumber, torpor; recession, remission; idleness

near antonyms recommencement, renewal, resumption, resuscitation

antonyms continuance, continuation

abhor *vb* to dislike strongly — see HATE

abhorrence *n* something or someone that is hated — see HATE 2

2 a very strong dislike — see HATE 1

abhorrent *adj* causing intense displeasure, disgust, or resentment — see OFFENSIVE 1

abide *vb* 1 to continue to be in a place for a significant amount of time — see STAY 1

2 to have a home — see LIVE 1

3 to put up with (something painful or difficult) — see BEAR 2

4 to remain indefinitely in existence or in the same state — see CONTINUE 1

ability *n* the physical or mental power to do something <as a result of the accident he lost the *ability* to walk>

synonyms capability, capacity, competence, competency, faculty

related words aptitude, aptness, endowment, facility, gift, knack, talent; adroitness, deftness, dexterity, prowess, skill; gray matter, instinct, intelligence, reason, understanding; potency, staying power, stuff; adequacy, effectiveness, effectualness, fitness, form, influence, resourcefulness, usefulness; means, resources, wherewithal

near antonyms helplessness, impotence, paralysis, powerlessness, weakness; defectiveness, deficient-

cy, inadequacy, ineffectiveness, ineffectualness, uselessness; debilitation, disablement, impairment, incapacitation

antonyms disability, inability, incapability, incapacity, incompetence, incompetency, ineptitude, ineptness

abjure *vb* to solemnly or formally reject or go back on (as something formerly adhered to) <*abjured* some long-held beliefs when she converted to another religion>

synonyms recant, renounce, retract, take back, unsay, withdraw

related words contradict, deny, disavow, disclaim, disown, gainsay, negate, negative, repudiate; abandon, abnegate, forsake, give up, relinquish, spurn, surrender; controvert, disagree (with), disprove, dispute, rebut, refute; back down, back off, backtrack; disallow, recall, renege, revoke

near antonyms acknowledge, admit, affirm, assert, avow, claim, contend, declare, maintain, proclaim, profess, state; back, confirm, defend, endorse (*also* indorse), espouse, maintain, support, uphold; accept, adopt, embrace

antonyms adhere (to)

ablaze *adj* 1 being on fire <the entire block was *ablaze* by the time fire fighters arrived>

synonyms afire, aflame, blazing, burning, combusting, fiery, flaming, ignited, inflamed, kindled, lighted (*or* lit)

related words aglow, alight, flaring, flickering, glowing, live, smoldering; broiling, hot, piping hot, red-hot, roasting, scalding, scorching, searing, sizzling; burnt, charred, incinerated, scorched, seared, singed

near antonyms choked, damped, dead, doused, extinguished, quenched, smothered, snuffed (out), stamped (out), suffocated

2 filled with much light — see BRIGHT 2

able *adj* having the required skills for an acceptable level of performance — see COMPETENT

able-bodied *adj* enjoying health and vigor — see HEALTHY 1

ably *adv* in a skillful or expert manner — see WELL 3

abnegate *vb* to give up (as a position of authority) formally — see ABDICATE

abnegation *n* the act or practice of giving up or rejecting something once enjoyed or desired — see RENUNCIATION

abnormal *adj* 1 being out of the ordinary — see EXCEPTIONAL

2 departing from some accepted standard of what is normal — see DEVIANT

abnormality *n* a person, thing, or event that is not normal — see FREAK 1

abode *n* the place where one lives — see HOME 1

abolish *vb* to put an end to by formal action <the U.S. *abolished* slavery by constitutional amendment on December 6, 1865>

synonyms abrogate, annul, cancel, dissolve, invalidate, negate, nullify, quash, repeal, rescind, void

related words countermand, override, overrule, overturn, veto; retract, reverse, revoke, suspend, withdraw; ban, enjoin, forbid, outlaw, prohibit; disallow, dismiss, reject; eliminate, eradicate, erase, liquidate, remove, throw out, write off

phrases do away with

near antonyms establish, found, institute; formalize, legalize, legitimate, legitimize, validate; pass,

ratify; allow, approve, authorize, clear, endorse (*also* indorse), permit, sanction, warrant; command, decree, mandate, prescribe, order

abominable *adj* causing intense displeasure, disgust, or resentment — see OFFENSIVE 1

abominate *vb* to dislike strongly — see HATE

abomination *n* something or someone that is hated — see HATE 2

2 a very strong dislike — see HATE 1

aboriginal *adj* belonging to a particular place by birth or origin — see NATIVE 1

abort *vb* to put an end to (something planned or previously agreed to) — see CANCEL 1

abortion *n* the act of putting an end to something planned or previously agreed to — see CANCELLATION

abortive *adj* producing no results — see FUTILE

abounding *adj* possessing or covered with great numbers or amounts of something specified — see RIFE

about *adv* 1 on all sides or in every direction — see AROUND 1

2 toward the opposite direction — see AROUND 2

3 very close to but not completely — see ALMOST

about *prep* 1 having to do with <a story *about* a young man who goes off to war>

synonyms apropos of, concerning, of, on, regarding, respecting, toward (*or* towards)

related words as to, over

phrases as regards

2 close to — see AROUND 1

3 in random positions within the boundaries of — see AROUND 2

above *prep* higher than <one minute our kite was *above* the telephone wires; the next minute it was tangled in them>

synonyms over

related words atop

near antonyms underneath

antonyms below, beneath, under

above *adv* to or in a higher place <we eventually got used to the planes constantly flying *above*>

synonyms aloft, over, overhead, skyward

near antonyms underneath

antonyms below, beneath, under

abrade *vb* 1 to damage or diminish by continued friction <ropes *abraded* by the rocks were a huge danger to the climbers>

synonyms chafe, erode, fray, fret, gall, rub, wear

related words file, gnaw, grate, graze, grind, nibble, rasp, sandblast, sandpaper, scour, scrape, scuff, shave; erase, reduce, rub out, wear out, wipe (away); bite, break down, break up, chew, corrode, decompose, disintegrate, dissolve, eat; hone, sharpen, whet

2 to make sore by continued rubbing — see CHAFE 1

3 to damage by rubbing against a sharp or rough surface — see SCRAPE 2

abreast *adj* having information especially as a result of study or experience — see FAMILIAR 2

abridge *vb* to make less in extent or duration — see SHORTEN

abridgment *or* **abridgement** *n* a shortened version of a written work <this Italian-English pocket dictionary is an *abridgment* of the hardback edition>

synonyms abbreviation, condensation, digest

related words abstract, brief, outline, overview, précis, recap, recapitulation, résumé (*or* resume *also* resumé), review, sketch, sum, summariza-

tion, summary, summation, survey, syllabus, synopsis, wrap-up

near antonyms amplification, elaboration, enlargement, expansion

abrogate *vb* to put an end to by formal action — see ABOLISH

abrupt *adj* 1 being or characterized by direct, brief, and potentially rude speech or manner — see BLUNT 1

2 having an incline approaching the perpendicular — see STEEP 1

abruptly *adv* with great suddenness — see SHORT

abscond *vb* to get free from a dangerous or confining situation — see ESCAPE 1

absence *n* 1 a state of being without something necessary, desirable, or useful — see NEED 1

2 the fact or state of being absent — see LACK 1

absent *adj* 1 not at a certain place (three students were *absent* because of the flu)

synonyms away, missing, out

related words AWOL, truant; departed, gone, retired; abroad, vacationing

near antonyms accompanying, attending, participating

antonyms here, present

2 not present or in evidence (the usual stir of activity was *absent* in the city due to the report of an escaped lion from the zoo)

synonyms lacking, missing, nonexistent, wanting

related words dead, departed, extinct, lost, perished, vanished; defunct, done, expired, finished, lapsed, obsolete, over, passé; inadequate, insufficient, rare, scarce, sparse, uncommon

near antonyms active, alive, animate, living, thriving; current, going, prevailing, uncanceled; common, prevalent; apparent, conspicuous, evident, obvious, plain

antonyms existent, present

3 lost in thought and unaware of one's surroundings or actions — see ABSENTMINDED 1

absentminded *adj* 1 lost in thought and unaware of one's surroundings or actions (the grieving woman was so *absentminded* that she left her key in the lock after opening the door)

synonyms absent, abstracted, preoccupied

related words absorbed, daydreaming, distracted, dreaming, dreamy, engrossed, faraway, intent, pensive, rapt; heedless, inattentive, insensible, oblivious, unaware, unconscious, unheeding, unknowing, unmindful, unobservant, unobserving, unperceiving, unperceptive, unseeing, unthinking, unwary, unwitting, vacant; befogged, befuddled, bemused, bewildered, confused, dazed, flighty, foggy, forgetful, forgetting, hazy, muddled, scatterbrained, unfocused

near antonyms alive, attentive, aware, conscious, heedful, mindful, observant, observing, open-eyed, sharp, vigilant, wary, watchful, wide-awake; clearheaded, unconfused

antonyms alert

2 inclined to forget what one has learned or to do what one should — see FORGETFUL

absolute *adj* 1 exercising power or authority without interference by others (the *absolute* monarchy of Russia ended when Czar Nicholas II promised to share power with a legislative body)

synonyms autocratic, despotic, dictatorial, tyrannical (also tyrannic), tyrannous

related words authoritarian, totalitarian; arbitrary, high-handed, magisterial; domineering, im-

perious, masterful; all-powerful, almighty, omnipotent; autonomous, self-governing, sovereign; unconditional, unlimited

near antonyms circumscribed, restrained, restricted; constitutional, lawful

antonyms limited

2 having no exceptions or restrictions (ironing is an *absolute* bore) (I want the *absolute* truth)

synonyms all-out, arrant, categorical (also categorical), complete, consummate, dead, downright, flat, out-and-out, outright, perfect, profound, pure, regular, sheer, simple, stark, thorough, thoroughgoing, total, unadulterated, unalloyed, unconditional, unequivocal, unmitigated, unqualified, utter

related words authentic, classic, genuine, real, veritable; constant, endless, eternal, perpetual, undying, unremitting; extreme, rank, unrestricted; confirmed, habitual, hopeless, inveterate; deadly, extraordinary, frightful, horrible, huge, main, superlative, supreme, surpassing, terrible, terrific

near antonyms doubtful, dubious, equivocal, qualified, questionable, restricted, uncertain

3 being entirely without fault or flaw — see PERFECT 1

4 free from added matter — see PURE 1

5 serving to put an end to all debate or questioning — see CONCLUSIVE 1

absolution *n* release from the guilt or penalty of an offense — see PARDON

absolve *vb* to free from a charge of wrongdoing — see EXCULPATE

absorb *vb* 1 to take in (something liquid) through small openings (most of the spilled water was *absorbed* by the tablecloth)

synonyms drink, imbibe, soak (up), sponge, suck (up)

related words gulp, guzzle, quaff, sip, slurp, swallow, swig, will

2 to hold the attention of — see ENGAGE 1

absorbed *adj* having the mind fixed on something — see ATTENTIVE

absorbing *adj* holding the attention or provoking interest — see INTERESTING

absorption *n* a focusing of the mind on something — see ATTENTION 1

abstain (from) *vb* to resist the temptation of — see FORBEAR

abstract *adj* 1 dealing with or expressing a quality or idea (the book deals with *abstract* matters such as honesty and integrity on the job as well as practical subjects such as asking for a raise)

synonyms conceptual, theoretical (also theoretic)

related words conjectural, hypothetical, speculative; intellectual, mental, spiritual; ethereal, immaterial, incorporeal, insubstantial, metaphysical, nonmaterial, nonphysical, unsubstantial; impalpable, imperceptible, insensible, intangible, invisible; impractical, romantic, transcendent, transcendental, unreal, utopian, visionary

near antonyms material, physical; appreciable, detectable, discernable, noticeable, observable, palpable, perceptible, sensible, substantial, tangible, visible; defined, definite, distinct; actual, factual, real

antonyms concrete

2 using elements of form (as color, line, or texture) with little or no attempt at creating a realistic picture (Cubism is a style of *abstract* art in