

Webster's *New Explorer* Thesaurus

NEW EDITION

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INTRODUCTION

Synonyms

The English language contains a wealth of words, and perhaps no other language has as many synonyms as English. Synonyms give color, precision, and variety to a person's writing, breaking up the dullness that can come from too many overused words.

So, just what are synonyms? Put simply, synonyms are words that mean the same thing. Words that are only somewhat similar in meaning—but do not mean the same thing—are not true synonyms. They are merely related words, and they belong in a different category. In this thesaurus a word is classified as a synonym if and only if it shares with another word at least one basic meaning.

Here's an example of how we arrived at a basic meaning shared by one group of words. The word *freight* can be defined as “goods or cargo carried by ship, train, truck, or airplane.” We can break up the definition like this:



Since a person using *freight* as the starting point in his or her search for the right word is probably dissatisfied with that term, the word that he or she is seeking will most likely come under a broader or more basic meaning. We can phrase that more basic meaning as: “a mass or quantity of something taken up and carried, conveyed, or transported.” The list of synonyms for *freight*—*burden*, *cargo*, *draft*, *haul*, *lading*, *load*, *loading*, *payload*, *weight*—can all be said to share this basic meaning.

If a word is more limited in scope than the basic meaning given at a main entry, then it cannot be regarded as a synonym. Hence, *truckload*, which refers specifically to the load carried by a truck, cannot be a synonym of *freight* and the other members of *freight's* synonym group. Likewise, the words *mass* and *quantity* cannot themselves be regarded as synonyms because the notion of being carried, conveyed, or transported is not an essential part of their meaning.

Related Words

Oftentimes thesaurus users are not looking for something that means exactly the same as the word they already have. To help in this situation, this thesaurus includes lists of related words, which are words whose meanings are close enough to the synonymy group to be of interest to the user. These related words do not qualify as synonyms because they have meanings that differ from the basic meaning shared by the synonymy group in some significant way.

For example, the word *funny* has the meaning of “causing or intended to cause laughter.” A person who is making “funny faces” is causing, or at least trying to cause, others to laugh. *Witty*, which is certainly closely related to *funny*, has a slightly different meaning: “given to or marked by mature intelligent humor.” A witty person is someone who has a habit of making clever remarks that display a grown-up sense of humor. Thus, *funny* and *witty* are related, but the words are not synonymous. Because of the close relationship between two words like *funny* and *witty*, all of the words listed as synonyms at *witty* are given as related words at *funny*.

The lists of related words at a main entry in the thesaurus may be likened to the hyperlinks that connect one Web site to another on the Internet. Following the links between Web sites often takes one to new and unexpected places. Thesaurus users are encouraged to go from one related entry to another in their search for just the right word.

Some words are not true synonyms of anything, but because they are so fundamentally useful, they have been included in this thesaurus among the lists of related words and in places where they are likely to be most helpful. For example, the word *ballast*, which refers to any type of “heavy material used to make a ship steady,” is too narrow in meaning to have any synonyms of its own. It is related to the more general term *load*, however, and so, fittingly, it is included as a related word at the entry for *load*.

Antonyms

An antonym is a word whose meaning is directly opposite to another word's meaning. In this thesaurus, an antonym is a word that has a meaning that completely cancels out another word's

meaning. *Short* and *tall* are complete opposites. Something cannot be both short and tall at the same time, and both words suggest about the same degree of difference from the norm or average in height. *Good* and *evil* are another pair of exact opposites. Logically, something cannot be both *good* and *evil* in the same way and at the same time.

Words that are only opposite in some aspect of their meaning cannot be said to be true antonyms. For example, *sad*, which means “causing unhappiness,” is not a true antonym of *funny*, which means “causing or intended to cause laughter.” The opposite of unhappiness is happiness, and so the opposite of sad is happy. There are things, like a frowning clown, that can be both funny and sad, so these words can’t be antonyms. Pairs of words like *sad* and *funny* are better regarded as near antonyms.

Near Antonyms

Near antonyms are words that do not qualify as antonyms under the strict definition used for this thesaurus but that clearly have meanings in marked contrast with the members of a synonym group. For example, *afraid* is not so exactly opposite to *courageous* as *cowardly* is, but *afraid* and *courageous* certainly have markedly contrasting meanings and so are considered near antonyms. And just as a user may not be seeking a word that is exactly synonymous with another, he or she may likewise not be seeking a word that is exactly opposite. The user may simply want a word that lies somewhere on the opposite side of the range of meaning.

Phrases

This thesaurus also includes phrases that, taken as a whole, are synonymous with individual words. Within this category are some words that are commonly used in combination with one another but are not necessarily included as entry words in most dictionaries. Some of these fixed phrases represent virtually the only way in which the word is used in contemporary English. For example, *in jeopardy* appears as a synonymous phrase at *liable* because a person exposed to something dangerous or undesirable is a person in jeopardy. The word *jeopardy* is generally only used in the phrase *in jeopardy*.

Idioms constitute the other major class of word combinations that are entered under the heading of Phrases. Idioms are phrases that have a special meaning that is different from the literal meaning that a person would get if adding together the individual meanings of the components of the phrase. For example, the phrase *make good* is virtually meaningless if one attempts to piece together the literal meanings of *make* and *good*. As a fixed phrase, however, *make good* means “to reach a desired level of accomplishment” and is a synonym of *succeed*.

What this thesaurus does not enter are phrases that are simple restatements of the basic meaning shared by the members of the synonym group. The verb *remark*, for example, might be defined as “to express as an opinion.” Such rewordings of a basic definition have no place in a thesaurus because they contribute nothing useful to the user’s vocabulary.

Choosing the Right Word—Using Your Dictionary

Even after you have mastered all of these categories, deciding which word in a thesaurus entry is best for your purposes is not always easy. The basic meaning shared by the members of a synonym group cannot tell you everything you need to know in order to choose the word that best suits your needs.

Something that is “very pleasing to look at” can be described as *attractive*, *beauteous*, *beautiful*, *bonny*, *comely*, *cute*, *fair*, *gorgeous*, *handsome*, *knockout*, *lovely*, *pretty*, *ravishing*, *sightly*, *stunning*, or *taking*, but which word is best for describing a sunset? A city? Should you use *knockout* to describe a cathedral or *ravishing* for a sports car?

If after reviewing the synonyms, you decide that you still have not found the right word, then you have the list of related words to consider:

related words alluring, appealing, charming, delightful, eye-catching, glamorous (*also* glamorous), prepossessing; elegant, exquisite, glorious, resplendent, splendid, statuesque, sublime, superb; flawless, perfect, radiant; dainty, delicate; personable, presentable

Now you have 38 words that mean the same thing or nearly the same thing as *beautiful*. Here’s where you need a good dictionary. You can consult the dictionary to get a precise definition of any word in the lists, and perhaps an example of its use. You should always use this thesaurus along with a good dictionary.

A

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; repeopled

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, swill

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