

THE  
Oxford  
American  
Dictionary  
of  
Current  
English

New York Oxford  
Oxford University Press  
1999

Oxford University Press

New York Oxford

Athens Auckland Bangkok Bogotá Buenos Aires  
Calcutta Cape Town Chennai Dar es Salaam  
Delhi Florence Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi  
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City  
Mumbai Nairobi Paris São Paulo Shanghai  
Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto Warsaw

and associated companies in  
Berlin Ibadan

Copyright © 1999 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.,  
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,  
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means,  
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,  
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Oxford American dictionary of current English.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-19-513374-9 (hc : alk. paper)

1. English language Dictionaries. 2. English language—United  
States Dictionaries. 3. Americanisms Dictionaries.

PE1628.08617 1999

423—dc21

99-39972  
CIP

This book includes some words that are, or are asserted to be, proprietary names or trademarks. Their inclusion does not imply that they have acquired for legal purposes a nonproprietary or general significance, nor is any other judgment implied concerning their legal status. In cases where the editor has some evidence that a word is used as a proprietary name or trademark this is indicated by the designation *trademark*, but no judgment concerning the legal status of such words is made or implied thereby.

5 7 9 8 6

Printed in the United States of America  
on acid-free paper

ing. 2 criticize severely. 3 peel off (skin, bark, peel, etc.).

**F layer** /éf layər/ *n.* the highest and most strongly ionized region of the ionosphere.

**flea** /fleə/ *n.* a small wingless jumping insect of the order Siphonaptera, feeding on blood. □ a **flea in one's ear** a sharp reproof.

**flea-bag** /fleəbæg/ *n. sl.* a shabby or unattractive place or thing.

**flea-bit-ten** *adj.* 1 bitten by or infested with fleas. 2 shabby.

**flea col-lar** *n.* an insecticidal collar for dogs and cats.

**flea mar-ket** *n.* a market selling secondhand goods, etc.

**fleck** /fleɪk/ *n. & v. • n.* 1 a small patch of color or light (eyes with green flecks). 2 a small particle or speck. 3 a spot on the skin; a freckle. • *v. tr.* mark with flecks.

**fled** *past and past part.* of FLEE.

**fledge** /fleɪdʒ/ *v.* 1 *intr.* (of a bird) grow feathers. 2 *tr.* provide (an arrow) with feathers. 3 *tr.* bring up (a young bird) until it can fly. 4 *tr.* (as **fledged adj.**) a able to fly. b independent; mature. 5 *tr.* deck or provide with feathers or down.

**fledg-ling** /flɛdʒlɪŋ/ *n.* 1 a young bird. 2 an inexperienced person.

**flee** /fleə/ *v. (past and past part. fled /fled/)* 1 *intr.* (often foll. by *from, before*) a run away. b seek safety by fleeing. 2 *tr.* run away from; leave abruptly; shun (*fled the room; fled his attentions*). 3 *intr.* vanish.

**fleece** /flees/ *n. & v. • n.* 1 a the woolly covering of a sheep or a similar animal. b the amount of wool sheared from a sheep at one time. 2 something resembling a fleece, esp.: a a woolly or rough head of hair. b a soft warm fabric with a pile, used for lining coats, etc. c a white cloud, a blanket of snow, etc. • *v. tr.* 1 (often foll. by *of*) strip (a person) of money, valuables, etc.; swindle. 2 remove the fleece from (a sheep, etc.); shear. 3 cover as if with a fleece (*a sky fleeced with clouds*). □ **fleeced adj.** (also in *comb.*).

**fleec-y** /fleeseɪ/ *adj.* (**fleecier, fleeciest**) 1 of or like a fleece. 2 covered with a fleece. □ **fleec-i-ness** *n.*

**fleet**<sup>1</sup> /fleɪt/ *n.* 1 a a number of warships under one commander. b (prec. by *the*) all the warships and merchant ships of a nation. 2 a number of ships, aircraft, buses, trucks, taxis, etc., operating together or owned by one proprietor.

**fleet**<sup>2</sup> /fleɪt/ *adj.* swift; nimble. □ **fleet-ly** *adv.* **fleet-ness** *n.*

**Fleet Ad-mi-ral** *n.* an admiral of the highest rank in the US Navy.

**fleet-ing** /fleɪtɪŋ/ *adj.* transitory; brief. □ **fleet-ing-ly** *adv.*

**Flem-ing** /flémɪŋ/ *n.* 1 a native of medieval Flanders in the Low Countries. 2 a member of a Flemish-speaking people inhabiting N. and W. Belgium (see also **WALLOON**).

**Flem-ish** /flémɪʃ/ *adj. & n. • adj.* of or relating to Flanders. • *n.* the language of the Flemings.

**flesh** /flesh/ *n. & v. • n.* 1 a the soft substance consisting of muscle and fat found between the skin and bones of an animal or a human. b plumpness; fat (*has put on flesh*). c *archaic* meat, esp. excluding poultry, game, and offal. 2 the body as opposed to the mind or the soul, esp. considered as sinful. 3 the pulpy substance of a fruit or a plant. 4 a the visible surface of the human body. b (also **flesh col-or**) a yellowish pink color. 5 animal or human life. • *v. tr.* embody in flesh. □ **flesh out** make or become substantial. **in the flesh** in bodily form; in person. **the way of all flesh** experience common to all humankind. □ **flesh-less** *adj.*

**flesh and blood** *n. & adj. • n.* 1 the body or its substance. 2 humankind. 3 human nature, esp. as being

fallible. • *adj.* actually living, not imaginary or supernatural. □ **one's own flesh and blood** near relatives; descendants.

**flesh-ly** /fléshlee/ *adj.* (**fleshier, fleshiest**) 1 (of desire, etc.) bodily; sensual. 2 mortal; not divine. 3 worldly.

**flesh-pots** /fléshpɒts/ *n. pl.* places providing luxurious or hedonistic living.

**flesh-y** /fléshē/ *adj.* (**fleshier, fleshiest**) 1 plump; fat. 2 of flesh; without bone. 3 (of plant or fruit tissue) pulpy. 4 like flesh. □ **flesh-i-ness** *n.*

**fleur-de-lis** /flōrdəleɪs/ *n.* (also **fleur-de-lys**) (*pl.* **fleurs-pronunc. same**) 1 the iris flower. 2 *Heraldry* a a lily composed of three petals bound together near their bases. b the former royal arms of France.

**flew** *past of FLY*<sup>1</sup>.

**flex** /fleɪks/ *v. 1 tr. & intr.* bend (a joint, limb, etc.) or be bent. 2 *tr. & intr.* move (a muscle) or (of a muscle) be moved to bend a joint.

**flex-i-ble** /fléksɪbəl/ *adj.* 1 able to bend without breaking; pliable. 2 manageable. 3 adaptable; variable (*works flexible hours*). □ **flex-i-bil-i-ty** *n.* **flex-i-bly** *adv.*

**flex-ile** /fléksəl, -sɪl/ *adj. archaic* 1 supple; mobile. 2 tractable; manageable. 3 versatile. □ **flex-i-l-i-ty** /-sɪlɪteɪ/ *n.*

**flex-i-time** /fléksɪtɪm/ *n.* var. of FLEXITIME.

**flex-or** /fléksər/ *n.* (in full **flexor muscle**) a muscle that bends part of the body (cf. **EXTENSOR**).

**flex-time** /fléksɪtɪm/ *n.* 1 a system of working a set number of hours with the starting and finishing times chosen within agreed limits by the employee. 2 the hours worked in this way.

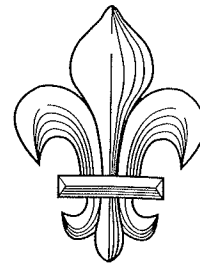
**flick** /flɪk/ *n. & v. • n.* 1 a a light, sharp blow with a whip, etc. b the sudden release of a bent finger or thumb, esp. to propel a small object. 2 a sudden movement or jerk. 3 a quick turn of the wrist in playing games, esp. in throwing or striking a ball. 4 a slight, sharp sound. 5 *colloq.* a a movie. b (in *pl.*; prec. by *the*) the movies. • *v. 1 tr.* (often foll. by *away, off*) strike or move with a flick (*flicked the ash off his cigar*). 2 *tr.* give a flick with (a whip, towel, etc.). 3 *intr.* make a flicking movement or sound.

**flick-er**<sup>1</sup> /flɪkər/ *v. & n. • v. intr.* 1 (of light) shine unsteadily. 2 (of a flame) burn unsteadily, alternately flaring and dying down. 3 a (of a flag, a reptile's tongue, an eyelid, etc.) move or wave back and forth; quiver; vibrate. b (of the wind) blow lightly and unsteadily. 4 (of hope, etc.) increase and decrease unsteadily. • *n.* a flickering movement, light, thought, etc.

**flick-er**<sup>2</sup> /flɪkər/ *n.* any woodpecker of the genus *Colaptes*, a ground-feeder native to N. America.

**flier** /flɪər/ *n.* (also **fly-er**) *colloq.* 1 an airman or airwoman. 2 a thing that flies in a specified way (*a poor flier*). 3 a fast-moving animal or vehicle. 4 an ambitious or outstanding person. 5 (usu. **fly-er**) a small handbill. 6 a speculative investment. 7 a flying jump.

**flight**<sup>1</sup> /flaɪt/ *n.* 1 a the act or manner of flying through the air (*studied swallows' flight*). b the movement or passage of a projectile, etc., through the air (*the flight of an arrow*). 2 a a journey made through the air or in space. b a timetable journey made by an airline. c a military air unit of two or more aircraft. 3 a a flock of birds, insects, etc. b a migration. 4 (usu. foll. by *of*) a series, esp. of stairs between floors, or of hurdles across a race track. 5 a mental or verbal excursion or sally (of wit, etc.) (*a flight of fancy*). 6 the trajectory and pace of a ball in games. 7 the distance that a bird, aircraft, or missile can fly. 8 (usu. foll. by *of*) a volley (*a flight*



fleur-de-lis

to the flames). 4 *tr.* esp. *Law* urge or represent esp. *def.* essentially (*that, I submit, is a misrepresentation*). □ **submitter** *n.*

**sub-mul-ti-ple** /sʊbmʊltɪpl̩/ *n.* & *adj.* ● *n.* a number that can be divided exactly into a specified number. ● *adj.* being such a number.

**sub-nor-mal** /sʊbnɔːrml̩/ *adj.* 1 (esp. as regards intelligence) below normal. 2 less than normal. □ **sub-normality** /-mɔːlɪteɪ/ *n.*

**sub-nu-cle-ar** /sʊbnʊkleeər, -nyʊ- / *adj.* *Physics* occurring in or smaller than an atomic nucleus.

**sub-or-bit-al** /sʊbɔːrbɪtəl/ *adj.* 1 situated below the orbit of the eye. 2 (of a spaceship, etc.) not completing a full orbit of the earth.

**sub-or-der** /sʊbɔːrdər/ *n.* a taxonomic category below an order.

**sub-or-di-nate** *adj., n., & v.* ● *adj.* /sʊbɔːrdɪnət/ (usu. foll. by *to*) of inferior importance or rank; secondary; subservient. ● *n.* /sʊbɔːrdɪnət/ a person working under another. ● *v.* *tr.* /sʊbɔːrdɪnəɪt/ (usu. foll. by *to*) 1 make subordinate; treat or regard as of minor importance. 2 make subservient. □ **sub-or-di-na-tion** /-nəɪʃən/ *n.*

**sub-or-di-nate clause** *n.* a clause serving as an adjective, adverb, or noun in a main sentence because of its position or a preceding conjunction.

**sub-orn** /sʊbɔːrn/ *v.* *tr.* induce by bribery, etc., to commit perjury or any other unlawful act.

**sub-phy-lum** /sʊbfɪləm/ *n.* (*pl.* *subphyla* /-lə/) *Biol.* a taxonomic category below a phylum.

**sub-plot** /sʊbplɒt/ *n.* a subordinate plot in a play, etc.

**sub-poe-na** /sʊpɛnə/ *n.* & *v.* ● *n.* a writ ordering a person to appear in court. ● *v.* *tr.* (*past* and *past part.* *subpoenaed* or *subpoena'd*) serve a subpoena on.

**sub-ro-ga-tion** /sʊbrəgəʃən/ *n.* *Law* the substitution of one party for another as creditor, with the transfer of rights and duties. □ **sub-ro-gate** /sʊbrəgəɪt/ *v.* *tr.*

**sub-ro-sa** /sʊbrɔːzə/ *adj.* & *adv.* in secrecy or confidence.

**sub-rou-tine** /sʊbrʊteɪn/ *n.* *Computing* a routine designed to perform a frequently used operation within a program.

**sub-scribe** /sʊbskrɪb/ *v.* 1 *tr.* & *intr.* (usu. foll. by *to*, *for*) contribute (a specified sum) or make or promise a contribution to a fund, project, charity, etc., esp. regularly. 2 *intr.* (usu. foll. by *to*) express one's agreement with an opinion, resolution, etc. (*cannot subscribe to that*).

**sub-scrib-er** /sʊbskrɪbər/ *n.* 1 a person who subscribes. 2 a person paying for the renting of a telephone line, television cable connection, etc.

**sub-script** /sʊbskrɪpt/ *adj.* & *n.* ● *adj.* written or printed below the line. ● *n.* a subscript number or symbol.

**sub-scrip-tion** /sʊbskrɪpʃən/ *n.* 1 *a* the act or an instance of subscribing. *b* money subscribed. 2 *a* an agreement to take and pay for usu. a specified number of issues of a newspaper, magazine, etc. *b* the money paid by this.

**sub-sec-tion** /sʊbsekʃən/ *n.* a division of a section.

**sub-se-quent** /sʊbsɪkwənt/ *adj.* (usu. foll. by *to*) following a specified event, etc., in time, esp. as a consequence. □ **sub-se-quent-ly** *adv.*

**sub-ser-vi-ent** /sʊbsərveɪənt/ *adj.* 1 cringing; obsequious. 2 (usu. foll. by *to*) instrumental. 3 (usu. foll. by *to*) subordinate. □ **sub-ser-vi-ence** *n.*

**sub-set** /sʊbset/ *n.* 1 a secondary part of a set. 2 *Math.* a set all the elements of which are contained in another set.

**sub-side** /sʊbsɪd/ *v.* *intr.* 1 become tranquil; abate (*excitement subsided*). 2 (of water, suspended matter, etc.) sink. 3 (of the ground) cave in; sink. 4 (of a building, ship, etc.) sink lower in the ground or water. 5 (of a

swelling, etc.) become less. 6 *usu. joc.* (of a person) sink into a sitting, kneeling, or lying posture.

**sub-sid-i-ar-i-ty** /sʊbsɪdeəriəteɪ/ *n.* (*pl.* *-ties*) 1 the quality of being subsidiary. 2 the principle that a central authority should perform only tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a local level.

**sub-sid-i-ar-y** /sʊbsɪdeəriə/ *adj.* & *n.* ● *adj.* 1 serving to assist or supplement. 2 (of a company) controlled by another. ● *n.* (*pl.* *-ies*) 1 a subsidiary thing or person. 2 a subsidiary company.

**sub-sid-ize** /sʊbsɪdɪz/ *v.* *tr.* 1 pay a subsidy to. 2 reduce the cost of by subsidy (*subsidized lunches*). □ **sub-sid-i-za-tion** *n.*

**sub-sid-y** /sʊbsɪdeɪ/ *n.* (*pl.* *-dies*) 1 money granted by the government or a public body, etc., to keep down the price of commodities, etc. (*housing subsidy*). 2 money granted to a charity or other undertaking held to be in the public interest. 3 any grant of money.

**sub-sist** /sʊbsɪst/ *v.* *intr.* 1 (often foll. by *on*) keep oneself alive (*subsists on vegetables*). 2 remain in being; exist. 3 (foll. by *in*) be attributable to (*its excellence subsists in its freshness*). □ **sub-sist-ent** *adj.*

**sub-sist-ence** /sʊbsɪstəns/ *n.* 1 the state or an instance of subsisting. 2 *a* the means of supporting life; a livelihood. *b* a minimal level of existence or the income providing this (*a bare subsistence*).

**sub-sist-ence farm-ing** *n.* farming which directly supports the farmer's household without producing a significant surplus for trade.

**sub-soil** /sʊbsɔɪl/ *n.* soil lying immediately under the surface soil.

**sub-son-ic** /sʊbsɒnɪk/ *adj.* relating to speeds less than that of sound.

**sub-spe-cies** /sʊbspeʃeɪz, -seɪz/ *n.* (*pl.* *same*) *Biol.* a taxonomic category below a species, usu. a fairly permanent geographically isolated variety. □ **sub-spe-cif-ic** /-spəsɪfɪk/ *adj.*

**subst.** *abbr.* 1 substantive. 2 substitute.

**sub-stance** /sʊbstəns/ *n.* 1 *a* the essential material forming a thing (*the substance was transparent*). *b* a particular kind of material having uniform properties (*this substance is salt*). 2 *a* reality; solidity (*ghosts have no substance*). *b* seriousness or steadiness of character (*there is no substance in him*). 3 addictive drugs or alcohol, etc. (*problems of substance abuse*). 4 the theme or subject of a work of art, argument, etc. (*prefer the substance to the style*). 5 the real meaning or essence of a thing. 6 wealth and possessions (*a woman of substance*).

**sub-stand-ard** /sʊbstændərd/ *adj.* 1 of less than the required or normal quality or size; inferior. 2 (of language) not conforming to standard usage.

**sub-stan-tial** /sʊbstəntʃəl/ *adj.* 1 *a* of real importance or validity (*made a substantial contribution*). *b* of large size or amount (*awarded substantial damages*). 2 of solid material or structure (*a substantial house*). 3 commercially successful. 4 true in large part (*substantial truth*). 5 having substance. □ **sub-stan-tial-i-ty** /-ʃeɪlɪteɪ/ *n.* **sub-stan-tial-ly** *adv.*

**sub-stan-ti-ate** /sʊbstəntʃeɪt/ *v.* *tr.* prove the truth of (a charge, statement, claim, etc.); give good grounds for. □ **sub-stan-ti-a-tion** /-əɪʃən/ *n.*

**sub-stan-tive** /sʊbstəntɪv/ *adj.* & *n.* ● *adj.* (also /sʊbstəntɪv/) 1 having separate and independent existence. 2 *Gram.* expressing existence. 3 *Mil.* (of a rank, etc.) permanent, not acting or temporary. ● *n.* *Gram.* = NOUN.

**sub-stan-tive verb** *n.* the verb 'to be'.

**sub-sta-tion** /sʊbstəɪʃən/ *n.* a subordinate station, esp. one reducing the high voltage of electric power transmission to that suitable for supply to consumers.

**sub-sti-tu-ent** /sʊbstɪtʃʊənt/ *adj.* & *n.* *Chem.* ● *adj.* (of a group of atoms) replacing another atom or group in a compound. ● *n.* such a group.