

**OED** The OED   
@OED

'chillax', v.  
Etymology: Blend of 'chill' v. and 'relax' v.  
To calm down and relax, to take it easy, to chill.

2:00 PM · Oct 11, 2019 · [Twitter Web App](#)

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**OED** The OED   
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As a historical and descriptive dictionary, the OED aims to track and record all adaptations of the English language, including a wide range of colloquial words.

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UPPER INTERMEDIATE **B2**

ON CD 10 

## GLOSSARY

- 1 **for short:** abbreviato
- 2 **entries:** voci
- 3 **to add:** aggiungere
- 4 **to take it easy:** prendersela con calma
- 5 **researchers:** ricercatori
- 6 **to keep up to date:** tenersi aggiornati
- 7 **useful:** utile
- 8 **to take out:** togliere
- 9 **to establish:** stabilire
- 10 **evidence:** prova
- 11 **at least:** almeno
- 12 **brand:** marchio
- 13 **paste:** pasta, crema
- 14 **to spread:** spalmare
- 15 **either ... or:** o ... o
- 16 **taste:** sapore
- 17 **issue:** questione
- 18 **to win:** vincere
- 19 **whatever:** qualunque cosa, vabbé
- 20 **disrespectful:** scortese
- 21 **widely:** ampiamente
- 22 **speech:** discorso
- 23 **to argue:** sostenere
- 24 **guiding principle:** principio guida

## Keeping Track of English

# HOW A DICTIONARY WORKS

Per 170 anni ha definito e documentato l'uso di più di 600.000 parole, ma il lavoro dell'Oxford English Dictionary non si ferma qui e rimane sempre attento all'attualità. Ti raccontiamo come lavora il dizionario di riferimento della lingua più parlata al mondo.

**T**here's no time to 'chillax' at the offices of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED for short<sup>1</sup>). Over 170 years after the massive English dictionary project began, entries<sup>2</sup> are constantly being revised and new words added<sup>3</sup>, like, for example, 'chillax'. This slang

word, which means "to calm down and relax; to take it easy<sup>4</sup>, to chill," was one of around three thousand additions made to the OED in 2019. As the English language keeps on growing, so does the dictionary. How does the OED's team of seventy lexicographers, researchers<sup>5</sup> and etymolo-

**OED** The OED   
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'marmite', n. and adj.

1. A proprietary name for: a savoury paste made from yeast extract and vegetable extract.

2. British colloquial. In allusive use, with reference to someone of something that polarizes opinions by provoking either strongly positive or strongly negative reactions, rather than indifference.

2:00 PM · Oct 11, 2019 · [Twitter Web App](#)

8 Retweets 25 Likes

**OED** The OED   
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'whatevs', int. and pron.

Used (usually in response to a question or statement) to indicate that the speaker is disinclined to engage with the matter in hand.

2:00 PM · Oct 11, 2019 · [Twitter Web App](#)

4 Retweets 16 Likes

word just because they see that people have started using it. Once a word enters the OED it's never taken out<sup>8</sup>, so the editors have to be sure a word really has become established<sup>9</sup> in the language before they add it. They look for written evidence<sup>10</sup> — books, newspapers, and online communications — showing that the word has been used for some years, usually at least<sup>11</sup> ten, before it gets a place in the dictionary.

## RECENT UPDATES

Every three months, the editors publish a list of the updates they've made to the dictionary. Some of these updates are revisions or additions to existing entries. For example, the first recorded use of the brand<sup>12</sup> name Marmite, referring to the dark, salty paste<sup>13</sup> that some people like to spread<sup>14</sup> on their toast, goes way back to 1902. But 2019 saw the addition of 'marmite' as an adjective. Because people tend to either love or<sup>15</sup> hate the taste<sup>16</sup> of Marmite, a 'marmite' issue<sup>17</sup> or person is one that divides opinion into two extremes.

The word 'whatevs', which is popular with teenagers, also won<sup>18</sup> a place in 2019. This slang form of the word 'whatever<sup>19</sup>' is a disrespectful<sup>20</sup> way to demonstrate that you have no interest in what has just been said to you. For example, Parent: "Have you got any homework?" Teenager: "Yeah. Whatevs."

## CONTROVERSY

One particularly marmite issue in 2019 was the inclusion of 'sumthin', 'sumptin', 'sumfin', and 'summink' as regional variants of the existing entry 'something'. It's true that these four pronunciations are widely<sup>21</sup> used in speech<sup>22</sup> but should they really be included in written form in the dictionary? Comments on social media were polarised. The editors argued<sup>23</sup> that including these variants helped to record the English language as it's actually used, something — or even sumthin — that has always been the guiding principle<sup>24</sup> of the OED. ☺

gists keep up to date<sup>6</sup> with such a quickly evolving, global language as English?

## ADDING NEW WORDS

Analysing social media has been a particularly useful<sup>7</sup> approach for editors, but they don't automatically include a new



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[www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)

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A notable entry in the October update to the OED is the term 'fake news'.

Although it was popularized in 2016 during the US presidential election campaign, did you know that 'fake news' can be dated back to 1890?

7:55 PM · Oct 9, 2019 · [Twitter Web App](#)

77 Retweets 104 Likes

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nomophobia, n.  
Origin: Formed within English, by compounding.  
Etymons: 'no' adj., 'mobile' n., '-phobia'  
Anxiety about not having access to a mobile phone or mobile phone services.

8:00 AM · Oct 22, 2019 · [Twitter Web App](#)

45 Retweets 102 Likes

**OED** The OED @OED

'Emoji' officially entered the OED in 2013. Our first recorded evidence for the word currently dates from 1997 📄 #WorldEmojiDay

5:02 PM · Oct 17, 2015 · [Hootsuite](#)

60 Retweets 31 Likes

**OED** The OED @OED

'O', n.  
Used to symbolize a hug, esp. at the end of the letter, greetings card, or the like.

2:00 PM · Oct 11, 2019 · [Twitter Web App](#)

2 Retweets 15 Likes

**OED** The OED @OED

The June update to the OED includes numerous new entries and senses surrounding the word 'bastard'.

From 'bastard sword' to 'bastarding', here we explore the word's etymology to examine how 'bastard' has developed to form the range of terms we know today.

12:30 PM · Jun 20, 2019 · [TweetDeck](#)

20 Retweets 31 Likes





## GLOSSARY

- 1 **goal:** scopo
- 2 **back then:** all'epoca
- 3 **at breakneck speed:**  
a una velocità folle  
(lett. da rompersi il collo)
- 4 **behind-the-scenes:**  
dietro le quinte
- 5 **brand new:** nuove di zecca
- 6 **to carry on:**  
continuare
- 7 **prescriptive:**  
normativo
- 8 **rather:** piuttosto
- 9 **indeed:** anzi
- 10 **to label:** etichettare
- 11 **to submit:** mandare
- 12 **the very foundation:**  
le fondamenta stesse
- 13 **to come across:**  
incontrare
- 14 **cornerstone:** pietra angolare, base

## INTERVIEW

## ADDING NEW WORDS TO ENGLISH

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) project began in 1857 with the goal<sup>1</sup> of reflecting changes in how English is used. It was ambitious back then<sup>2</sup>, but today must work at breakneck speed<sup>3</sup> to keep up with a rapidly-expanding vocabulary fomented by technological advancement and exchanged over the internet. Fiona McPherson is a senior editor at the OED. She gave *Speak Up* a behind-the-scenes<sup>4</sup> view of how the modern dictionary project works, beginning by describing the process of developing a new entry:



**Fiona McPherson (Scottish accent):** My job is as a new words editor, so I am responsible for putting brand new<sup>5</sup> words into the

dictionary. And I will start with a suggestion that somebody has made for a word that's not yet in the OED. So, I will take my suggestion, I'll make sure that I can find that there is evidence that this word is being used, because again, if it isn't, we wouldn't include it. And then I try to find the very first example that has been published in English. And I'll define the word and I'll try to find examples from published works which show the typical ways that this word is used. And I just carry on<sup>6</sup> from there, really. It's a bit of detective work really.

**ENGLISH, JUST AS IT IS**

The OED is a descriptive, not prescriptive<sup>7</sup> dictionary. That means it doesn't establish how English 'should' be used but rather<sup>8</sup> records how it 'is' used, as McPherson explains.

**Fiona McPherson:** One question I get asked a lot is whether or not slang and offensive language has any place in a dictionary. And really, to take slang, slang is part of what makes any language much more rich and varied. And because a word is in the OED, or indeed<sup>9</sup> any dic-

tionary, it doesn't mean that you have to use it. We're not telling people what words to use, we're just really recording the language that people are using. So slang words are definitely, completely legitimate for inclusion in the OED.

**BAD LANGUAGE**

That also means including vulgar or even racist and sexist words, says McPherson, with appropriate labelling<sup>10</sup>.

**Fiona McPherson:** Offensive words, because they also form part of the language, we wouldn't be doing our job if we didn't include these words as well. But what we always make sure we do is use any appropriate labelling, so that we'll say that a word is slang, we'll say that it's colloquial, we'll say that it's offensive, if indeed it is offensive. So that people know when they see these words, 'OK you maybe want to be careful about using this word in certain contexts or if you use this word you actually might be being quite offensive.'

**SOCIAL MEDIA SPEECH**

In last month's *Speak Up*, the writer Simon Winchester described how contributions sent through the post by thousands of ordinary people formed the basis of the dictionary's first edition, completed in 1928. McPherson talked about how suggestions from the public are still very much part of the OED process, although these days they're usually submitted<sup>11</sup> via Twitter or email.

**Fiona McPherson:** We always love when people contact us with suggestions for words that we maybe haven't yet included in the dictionary, or also suggestions for already existing entries. It goes back to the very foundation<sup>12</sup> of what the OED was built upon, when people would send examples of words that they had come across<sup>13</sup> in their everyday reading to the first editors. We very much value the public's input because without the public and people using language, there would be no reason for a dictionary, so it's a real cornerstone<sup>14</sup> of what we do. ☒

The Oxford  
English  
dictionary

SECOND EDITION

Volume I  
A–Bazouki

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS · OXFORD