

Introduction

The **Complete Primary Dictionary** is one of the first completely new English dictionaries of the twenty-first century. The dictionary was specially written for primary school children. It took more than five years to write.

Clear and precise

The language used is clear and simple. Each definition uses easy words, rather than difficult words that you need to look up. Clear examples show you how the words are used. Some words have several meanings or mean different things in different situations. These variations are known as ‘senses’. The dictionary defines all the senses of a word that are appropriate to your age group. If you look up the word ‘cell’, for example, you will find that it has five different senses. The everyday sense is ‘a small room in a prison or police station where prisoners are kept’, but the other important senses – which you will come across in science and in maths – are also given.

Each definition is precise and gives you the specific information you need. For example, crows and ravens belong to the same family of birds and are similar, but this dictionary tells you that a raven is very large, has shiny feathers and a heavy sharp beak and lives in mountainous areas, which will help you to identify it.

Phrases and idioms

Some English words are used with other words to make phrases or idioms. Idioms have a special meaning that is not the same as the usual meaning. This meaning too is included in the dictionary. For example, the noun ‘blink’ refers to the action of closing your eyes and opening them again quickly, but the dictionary also gives the meaning of two idioms – ‘in the blink of an eye’ (meaning very quickly) and ‘on the blink’ (a way of saying that a piece of equipment is not working very well).

New and old

Language is always changing. This dictionary includes many new words and also recognises the value of older words that you find in your favourite classics – words like ‘dell’ (a small valley) and ‘tidings’ (news). Such words widen your vocabulary and improve your understanding of the world.

Words across the curriculum

The **Complete Primary Dictionary** will help you in your schoolwork across all the National Curriculum subjects. Scientific terms such as ‘ecosystem’ and ‘polymer’, mathematical terms like ‘composite number’ and ‘order of operations’, words to do with language such as ‘phoneme’ and ‘grapheme’ – all these are clearly explained.

Proper nouns, such as the names of countries, and other names such as those referring to historical periods, are usually found only in encyclopedias. This dictionary, however, defines many of these nouns as used in the National Curriculum. So you can look up ‘Neolithic Age’ and ‘Industrial Revolution’, for example, as well as ‘Greenwich Mean Time’ and ‘Ghana’.

Origins

Did you know that the letter J entered English in 1066, for use in words borrowed from French? Or that the letter O still looks just as it did 3000 years ago? Each letter section opens with a short history of the shape of the capital letter. Other ‘Origin’ panels tell you about words with an interesting history – look up the origin of ‘denim’, for example – and ‘Culture note’ panels provide extra information about some words, with facts about traditions, history and famous people.

British and American English

Britain and America are sometimes described as two nations divided by a common language, because they occasionally use the same words in different ways. As many British children see American films and websites, this dictionary includes some words clearly labelled as American – with notes about differences in meaning where needed. Did you know, for example, that Americans refer to the ground floor of a building as the ‘first floor’? Many possible confusions like these are explained.