The eleventh edition of the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* has been fully revised, updated, and redesigned, as is appropriate for the first *Concise* of the 21st century. In producing this edition we have been able to draw on the language research and analysis carried out for the groundbreaking *Oxford Dictionary of English* (second edition), which was published in 2003. As with the very first edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, which made use of the ‘materials’ and ‘methods’ by which the editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* had ‘revolutionized lexicography’, so the eleventh edition makes use of the innovative principles and methodology devised for its larger cousin.

The first edition of the *Concise* was edited by the brothers Henry Watson and Frank George Fowler. Proposed in 1906, it was published in June 1911, whereupon it was praised as ‘a marvel of condensation, accomplished by skilful hands’ and ‘a miracle of condensed scholarship’. Revolutionary in its concentration on current English and in its copious use of illustrative examples ‘as a necessary supplement to definition’, the dictionary was an immediate success. Its compilation was indeed an Olympian achievement: the brothers were able to draw on the the *Oxford English Dictionary*, then still incomplete, for only the A–R part of the alphabet.

It is interesting today to look back at that first edition of the *Concise* and compare it with the new edition. The cover, bedecked with art nouveau swirls, proclaims ‘The Concise Oxford Dictionary, adapted by H. W. and F. G. Fowler from The Oxford Dictionary’. The book contains 1,064 pages, whereas the new edition has 1,681 larger pages.

The words covered, and the way they are described, have of course changed along with the language and the world. *COD1* had no entry for computer, radio, television, or cinema, although it did have cockyolly bird (‘nursery phr. for a bird’) and impaludism (‘morbid state ... found in dwellers in marshes’). It defined beverage as ‘drinking-liquor’, cancan as ‘indecent dance’, and neon as ‘lately discovered atmospheric gas’. Gay meant ‘full of or disposed to or indicating mirth; light-hearted, sportive’, while Lesbian was simply ‘of Lesbos’. Even spelling is different: horsebox, horse chestnut, and horsefly were all hyphenated, and rime and shew were given as variant spellings of rhyme and show.

The Fowler brothers, like all lexicographers until quite recently, had to rely largely on examples of usage that were derived from their own reading or sent in by others. Modern dictionaries are written and revised with the help
of searchable databases containing millions of words of English. For the eleventh edition we have made use of larger amounts of evidence than ever before: we were able to call upon the hundreds of millions of words of the Oxford English Corpus, which includes the citations database of the Oxford Reading Programme. This evidence informs everything we are able to say about the language and the words within it, whether in giving information about spelling, in ensuring accurate and precise definitions, or in establishing currency or level of formality. This latest edition of the Concise offers a description of the language that is as accurate, up to date, and objective as possible, using resources that the editors of the first edition could only dream of.

We have made particular efforts to ensure that the eleventh edition covers all those words, phrases, and meanings that form the central vocabulary of English in the modern world. Special attention has been given to scientific and technical vocabulary: we have consulted experts in fast-moving fields such as genetics, pharmacology, and computing. Rare, archaic, and literary language is represented as fully as ever before, and the latest Concise continues to celebrate all the richness and history of English.

The dictionary definitions retain the hallmark of conciseness, although this is balanced by an emphasis on clarity and accessibility, using ordinary modern English to explain technical and complex terms, with no abbreviations. With a nod to that first edition, we have added a thousand more illustrative examples to the text.

Features new to this edition include a greatly increased number of boxed usage notes, offering help with tricky and controversial questions of English. There are also around a hundred special Word Histories, which trace the stories of some of the language’s most interesting words.

Appendices include useful tables of factual information, a discussion of English used in electronic communication, an explanation of the different levels of English, and a guide to good English.

We are grateful to many people for their help in the preparation of this edition. We are particularly indebted to Michael Proffitt, Graeme Diamond, and the continuing work of the New Words team of the Oxford English Dictionary, for their help in identifying and drafting new words as they come into the language.

Catherine Soanes
Angus Stevenson
Guide to the use of the dictionary
**daikon** /dɛikən/ n., -kon/ another term for mooli.
- *origin* Japanese, from dai ‘large’ + kon ‘root’.

**daimyo** /dɛimjɔ/ n. (pl. daimyos) (in feudal Japan) one of the great lords who were vassals of the shogun.
- *origin* Japanese, from dai ‘great’ + myô ‘name’.

**daisy** n. (pl. daisies) a small grassland plant with composite flowers having a yellow disc and white rays. [Bellis perennis.] used in names of other plants of the same family, e.g. Michaelmas daisy.
- *phrases* pushing up (the) daisies informal dead and buried.
- *origin* OE dæges ðæge ‘day’s eye’ (because the flower opens in the morning and closes at night).

**damp** adj. slightly wet.  
- n. 1 moisture in the air, on a surface, or in a solid, typically with detrimental or unpleasant effects.  
- v. 1 make damp. 2 (often damp something down) make (a fire) burn less strongly by reducing its air supply.  
- control or restrain (a feeling or a situation). 3 reduce or stop the vibration of (the strings of a musical instrument).  
- Physics progressively reduce the amplitude of (an oscillation or vibration).

**derivative** dampish adj. damply adv. dampness n.
- *origin* ME (in the sense ‘noxious inhalation’): of W. Gmc origin.

**darts** n. (usu. treated as sing.) an indoor game in which darts are thrown at a dartboard to score points.
pedagogic /pəˈdæɡəɡɪk/ n. adj. relating to teaching. n. (pedagogics) [treated as sing.] old-fashioned term for pedAGOGY.

– derivatives pedagogical adj. pedagogically adv.

pedagogue /ˈpedəɡəʊ/ m. formal or humorous a teacher, especially one teaching children.

– origin ME: via L. from Gk. paidagôgos, denoting a slave who accompanied a child to school (from pais, paid ‘boy’ + agôgos ‘guide’).

pedagogy /ˈpedəɡɒジ/ n. (pl. pedagogies) the profession, science, or theory of teaching.

– derivatives pedagogical adj. pedagogically adv.

pedal1 /ˈped(o)l/ n. 1 each of a pair of foot-operated levers for powering a bicycle or other vehicle propelled by leg power; 2 a foot-operated throttle, brake, or clutch control in a motor vehicle. 3 each of a set of two or three foot-operated levers on a piano, for sustaining or softening the tone. 4 a foot-operated lever on other musical instruments, such as a harp or organ. 5 a foot-operated device for producing a sound effect on an electric guitar. 4 Music short for PEDAL NOTE. n. v. (pedals, pedalling, pedalled) US pedals, pedaling, pedaled 1 move by working the pedals of a bicycle. 2 use the pedals of a piano, organ, etc. – phrases with the pedal to the metal N. Amer. informal at full speed.

– derivatives pedaller (US pedaler) n.

– origin C17; from Fr. pédale, from Ital. pedale, from L. pedalis (see PEDAL2).

– usage People often confuse the words pedal and peddle. Pedal is a noun referring to a foot-operated lever, as on a bicycle, and a verb chiefly meaning ‘move by working the pedals of a bicycle’ (they pedalled along the road). Peddle, on the other hand, is a verb meaning ‘sell goods or promote an idea’ (he peddled printing materials around the country).

pedal2 /ˈped(o)l/ n. pl. adj. chiefly Medicine & Zoology relating to the foot or leg.

– origin C17; from L. pedalis, from pes, ped ‘foot’.

pedal note n. m. Music the lowest or fundamental note of a harmonic series in some brass and wind instruments. 2 (also pedal note) a note sustained in one pitch (usually the bass) through successive harmonies, some of which are independent of it.

pedalo /ˈpedəloʊ/ n. (pl. pedalos or pedalois) Brit. a small pedal-operated pleasure boat.

– origin 1950s: from PEDAL + -o.

pedal pusher n. 1 (pedal pushers) women’s calf-length trousers. 2 informal a cyclist.

pedal steel guitar n. a musical instrument played like the Hawaiian guitar, but set on a stand with pedals to adjust the tension of the strings.

pedant /ˈpedənt/ n. a person who is excessively concerned with minor detail or with displaying technical knowledge.

– derivatives pedantry n.

– origin C16; from Fr. pédant, from Ital. pedante, perde, from the first element of L. paedoogus (see PEDOGOGUS).

pedantical /ˈpedəntɪk(ə)l/ adj. of or like a pedant.

– derivatives pedantically adv.

peddle v. 1 sell (goods, especially small items) by going from place to place. 2 sell (an illegal drug or stolen item). 3 promote (an idea or view) persistently or widely. 4 origin C16: back-form. from PEDAL.

– usage On the confusion of peddle and pedal, see usage at PEDAL.

peddler n. variant spelling of PEDDLAR.

pederasty (also pederasterism) n. sexual intercourse between a man and a boy.

– derivatives pederast n. pederastic adj.

– origin C17; from mod. L. paederastria, from Gk paiderastria, from pais, paid ‘boy’ + erastes ‘lover’.

pedestal n. 1 the base or support on which a statue, obelisk, or column is mounted. 2 a position in which someone is greatly or uncritically admired: you shouldn’t put him on a pedestal. 2 each of the two supports of a kneehole desk or table. 3 the supporting column or base of a washbasin or toilet pan.

– origin C16: from Fr. piédestal, from Itsl. pidestallo, from pie ‘foot’ + de ‘of’ + xallo ‘stall’.

pedestrian n. a person walking rather than travelling in a vehicle. n. adj. dull, uninspired.

– derivatives pedestrianly adv.

– origin C18: from Fr. pédestre or L. pedester ‘going on foot’, also ‘written in prose’.

pedestrianize or pedestrianise v. make (a street or area) accessible only to pedestrians.

– derivatives pedestrianization n.

pediatrics n. pl. US spelling of PAEDIATRICS.

pedicab /ˈpɪdɪkæb/ n. a small pedal-operated vehicle serving as a taxi.

pedicel /ˈpɪdɪs(ə)l/ n. 1 rotate a small stalk bearing an individual flower in an inflorescence. 2 Anatomy & Zoology another term for PEDICLE.

– derivatives pedicellate /ˈdɪs(ə)lət/ adj.

– origin C17; from Mod. L. pedicellus ‘small foot’, dimin. of pes, ped ‘foot’.

pedicle /ˈpɪdɪk(ə)l/ n. 1 Anatomy & Zoology a small stalk-like connecting structure. 2 Medicine part of a skin graft left temporarily attached to its original site.

– origin C17; from L. pediculus ‘small foot’, dimin. of pes, ped.

pediculosis /ˈpɪdɪkjʊləʊsɪs/ n. Medicine infestation with lice.

– origin C19; from L. pediculus ‘louse’ + -osis.

pedicure n. a cosmetic treatment of the feet and toenails. v. usu. as pedicured: give a pedicure to. – derivatives pedicurist n.

– origin C19; from Fr. pédicure, from L. pes, ped ‘foot’ + curare ‘attend to’.

pedigree n. 1 the record of descent of an animal, showing it to be pure-bred. 2 a person’s lineage or ancestry. 3 a genealogical table. 3 the history or provenance of a person or thing.

– derivatives pedigreed adj.

– history

Pedigree comes from Old French pé de grue, which literally meant ‘crane’s foot’. The development of the modern meaning (recorded from the 17th century) arose from a mark used to denote succession in pedigrees or family trees, which had three branching lines and was likened to a bird’s foot. The first, medieval sense of pedigree in English was ‘family tree, genealogical table’.

pediment n. 1 Architecture the triangular upper part of the front of a classical building, typically surmounting a portico. 2 Geology a broad expanse of rock debris extending outwards from the foot of a slope.

– derivatives pedimental adj. pedimented adv.

– origin C16 (as perimêt): perh. an alt. of synonymous dial. pediment.

pedipalp /ˈpɪdɪpəl(ə)p/ n. Zoology each of the second pair of appendages attached to the cephalothorax of most arachnids.

– origin C19; from Mod. L. pedipalpi (pl.), from L. pes, ped ‘foot’ + palpus ‘palp’.

pedlar (chiefly US also peddler) n. 1 an itinerant trader in small goods. 2 a person who sells illegal drugs or stolen goods. 3 a person who peddles an idea or view.

– derivatives pedlary n. (archaic).

– origin ME: perh. an alt. of synonymous dial. pedlar.

– origin per. an alt. of synonymous dial. pedlar.

peddler n. variant spelling of PEDDLAR.

– pedo-1 n. comb. form US spelling of PAEDO-.

– pedo-2 /ˈpɛdoʊ/ n. comb. form relating to soil or soil types: pedogenic.

– origin from Gk pedon ‘ground’.

pedogenic /ˈpɛdoʊ(ə)ˈdʒɪnɪk/ adj. relating to or denoting processes occurring in soil or leading to the formation of soil.

pedology /ˌpɛdəˈlɒdʒi/ n. n. another term for SOIL SCIENCE.

– derivatives pedological /ˈpɛdəˈlɒdʒɪk(ə)l/ adj.

pedologist n.
vertebrate. informal hit on the head.

Phrases out of one's skull informal 1 out of one's mind; crazy. 2 very drunk. skull and crossbones a representation of a skull with two thighbones crossed below it as an emblem of piracy or death.

Derivatives -skulled adj.

Origin ME scolle; of unknown origin; cf. ON sköltr.

Skyline n. 1 a small close-fitting peakless cap or protective helmet. 2 the top part of the skull. 3 a plant of the mint family, whose tubular flowers have a helmet-shaped cup at the base. [Genus Scutellaria.]

Skunk n. 1 a black-and-white striped American mammal of the weasel family, able to spray foul-smelling irritant liquid from its anal glands at attackers. [Mephitis mephitis and other species.]

Informal 2 a contempitible person. Informal short for skunkweed. N. Amer. informal defeat or get the better of; especially by an overwhelming margin.

Origin C17; from Abnaki segankw.

Skunk cabbage n. 1 a North American arum, the flower of which has a distinctive unpleasant smell. [Ly McLhicolon americanum and Sym...]

Skyweed n. cannabis of a variety which has a high concentration of narcotic agents.

Skyworks n. pl. n. [usu. treated as sing.] US informal a small experimental laboratory or department of a company or institution.

Origin 1970s; allegedly from an association with the Skunk Works, an illegal still in the L.I.T Abner comic strip.

Sky n. (pl. skies) (often the sky) the region of the atmosphere and outer space seen from the earth.

Phrases the sky is the limit there is practically no limit. to the skies very highly; enthusiastically.

Origin open sky out of doors.

Derivatives skykey adj. skyless adj. skyward adj. & adv.

Skywards adv.

Origin ME, from ON sky ‘cloud’.

Sky blue n. a bright clear blue.

Sky-blue pink n. n. humorous a non-existent colour.

Skybox n. N. Amer. a luxurious enclosed seating area high up in a sports arena.

Sky burial n. a Tibetan funeral ritual involving the exposure of a dismembered corpse to sacred vultures.

Skycap n. N. Amer. a porter at an airport.

Sky-clad adj. (in the context of modern pagan ritual) naked.

Origin early 20th cent.: prob. a translation of Sanskrit Digambara (see Digambara).

Sky cloth n. a backdrop painted or coloured to represent the sky.

Skydiving n. the sport of jumping from an aircraft and performing acrobatic manoeuvres in the air under free fall before landing by parachute.

Derivatives skydive v. skydiver n.

Skyer (also skier) n. n. Cricket a hit which goes very high. Skyer terrier n. a small long-haired terrier of a slate-coloured or fawn-coloured Scottish breed.

Skyglow n. brightness of the night sky in a built-up area as a result of light pollution.

Sky-high adv. & adj. 1 as if reaching the sky; very high. 2 at or to a very high level; very great.

Skyhook n. 1 Climbing a small flattened hook, with an eye for attaching a rope, fixed temporarily into a rock face. 2 Basketball a lob.

Skyjack n. v. hijack (an aircraft). n. an act of skyjacking.

Derivatives skyjacker n.

Skylark n. a common lark of open country, noted for its prolonged song given in hovering flight. [Alauda arvensis.] v. play practical jokes or indulge in horseplay.

Skylight n. a window set in a roof or ceiling at the same angle.

Skyline n. an outline of land and buildings defined against the sky.

Skyline (also skylighted) adj. fitted with or lit by a skylight or skylights.

Sky marshal n. an armed guard who travels incognito to certain international flights, trained to take action in the event of a hijack or other terrorist attack.

Sky pilot n. informal a clergyman.

Skyr/skya/skyr n. an Icelandic dish consisting of curdled milk.

Origin from Icelandic.

Skyrocket n. a rocket designed to explode high in the air as a signal or firework. v. (skyrockets, skyrocketing, skyrocketed) informal (of a price or amount) increase very rapidly.

Skysail /skæGa/ n. a light sail above the royal in a square-rigged ship.

Skyscape n. a view or picture of an expanse of sky.

Skyscraper n. v. a very tall building of many storeys.

Sky surfing n. the sport of jumping from an aircraft and surfing through the air on the board before landing by parachute.

Skywatch n. informal observe or monitor the sky, especially for heavenly bodies or aircraft.

Derivatives skywatcher n.

Sky wave n. a radio wave reflected from the ionosphere.

Skyway n. chiefly N. Amer. 1 a recognized route followed by aircraft. 2 (also skywalk) a covered overhead walkway between buildings. 3 a raised motorway.

Skywriting n. words in the form of smoke trails made by an aircraft, especially for advertising.

Derivatives skywriter n.

Slab n. 1 a large, thick, flat piece of stone or concrete. 2 a flat, heavy table top or counter used for food preparation. Brit. a table used for laying a body on in mortuary. 3 a large, thick slice or piece of cake, bread, chocolate, etc. 4 an outer piece of timber sawn from a log. Climbing a large, smooth body of rock lying at a sharp angle to the horizontal.

V. (slabs, slabbing, slabbed) remove slabs from (a log or tree) to prepare it for sawing into planks.

Derivatives slabbed adj. slabbly adj.

Origin ME: of unknown origin.

Slabber chiefly Scottish & Irish n. 1 dribble at the mouth; slaver. 2 splash or splash. 3 chatter trivially. n. a dribble of saliva.

Origin C16; rel. to dial. slab ‘muddy place, puddle’.

Slack adj. 1 not taut or held tightly in position; loose. 2 (of business or trade) not busy; quiet. 3 careless, lazy, or negligent. W. Ind. slang or promiscuous. 5 of (a tide) neither ebbing nor flowing.

Informal 1 the part of a rope or line which is not held taut. 2 (slacks) casual trousers. 3 informal a period of inactivity or laziness.

V. 1 loosen (something, especially a rope). 2 (slack off) decrease in intensity or speed. 3 Brit. informal work slowly or lazily. 4 shake (lame).

Phrases cut someone some slack N. Amer. informal allow someone some leeway in their conduct. take (or pick) up the slack improve the use of resources to avoid an undesirable lull in business.

Derivatives slacken v. slackly adv. slackness n.

Origin OE slæc ‘inclined to be lazy, unhurried’, of GMC origin.

Slack n. 1 coal dust or small pieces of coal.

Origin ME: prob. from Low Ger. or Du.

Slacker n. informal 1 a person who avoids work or effort. US a person who evades military service. 2 a young person of a subculture characterized by apathy and aimlessness.

Slack water n. the state of the tide when it is turning, especially at low tide.

Slag n. 1 stony waste material separated from metals during the smelting or refining of ore. v. produce deposits of slag. 2 (often slag someone off) Brit. informal criticize abusively.

Derivatives slaggly adj.