
Concise Oxford English Dictionary

ELEVENTH EDITION

Edited by
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Preface

to the Eleventh Edition

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. *CODI* 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.

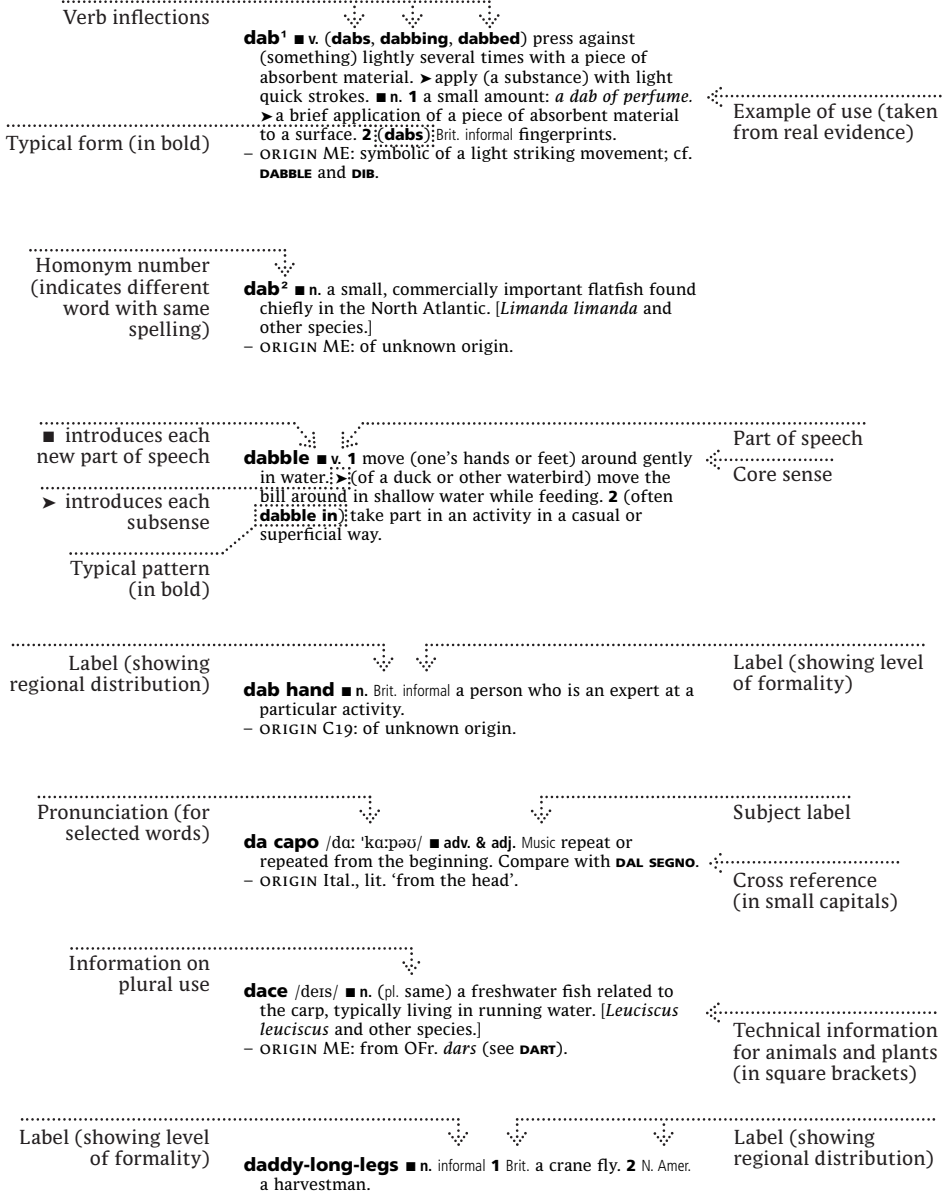
Features new to this edition include a greatly increased number of boxed usage notes, offering help with tricky and controversial questions of English. There are also around a hundred special Word Histories, which trace the stories of some of the language's most interesting words.

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.

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Guide to the use of the dictionary



Variant pronunciations **daikon** /ˈdaɪk(ə)n, -kɒn/ ■ n. another term for **MOOLI**.
 – ORIGIN Japanese, from *dai* ‘large’ + *kon* ‘root’.

Cross-reference entry (cross reference in small capitals)

daimyo /ˈdaɪmɪəʊ, ˈdaɪmjəʊ/ (also **daimio**) ■ n. (pl. **daimyos**) (in feudal Japan) one of the great lords who were vassals of the shogun.
 – ORIGIN Japanese, from *dai* ‘great’ + *myō* ‘name’.

Variant spelling

Plural form **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 and idioms – PHRASES **pushing up (the) daisies** informal dead and buried.
 – ORIGIN OE *dæges ēage* ‘day’s eye’ (because the flower opens in the morning and closes at night).

Word origin

damp ■ adj. slightly wet. ■ n. **1** moisture in the air, on a surface, or in a solid, typically with detrimental or unpleasant effects. ► (**damps**) archaic damp air or atmosphere. **2** archaic a check or discouragement. ■ 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).

Subject label

Derivatives (in alphabetical order) – DERIVATIVES **dampish** adj, **damply** adv, **dampness** n.
 – ORIGIN ME (in the sense ‘noxious inhalation’): of W. Gmc origin.

darts ■ pl. n. [usu. treated as sing.] an indoor game in which darts are thrown at a dartboard to score points.

Grammatical information (in square brackets)

pedagogic /ˌpedəˈɡɒɡɪk, -ˈɡɒdʒ-/ **n.** relating to teaching. **n.** (**pedagogics**) [treated as sing.] old-fashioned term for **PEDAGOGY**.

– DERIVATIVES **pedagogical** **adj.** **pedagogically** **adv.**

pedagogue /ˈpedəɡɒɡ/ **n.** formal or humorous a teacher, especially a strict or pedantic one.

– ORIGIN ME: via L. from Gk *paidagōgos*, denoting a slave who accompanied a child to school (from *paid-* ‘boy’ + *agōgos* ‘guide’).

pedagogy /ˈpedəɡɒɡi, -ɡɒdʒi/ **n.** (pl. **pedagogies**) the profession, science, or theory of teaching.

pedal ¹ /ˈped(ə)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**.

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 **PEDAL**²).

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(ə)l, ˈpiː-/ **n.** chiefly Medicine & Zoology relating to the foot or feet.

– ORIGIN C17: from L. *pedalis*, from *pes*, *ped-* ‘foot’.

pedal note **n.** Music **1** the lowest or fundamental note of a harmonic series in some brass and wind instruments. **2** (also **pedal point**) a note sustained in one part (usually the bass) through successive harmonies, some of which are independent of it.

pedalo /ˈpedələʊ/ **n.** (pl. **pedalos** or **pedaloers**) Brit. a small pedal-operated pleasure boat.

– ORIGIN 1950s: from **PEDAL**¹ + **-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 /ˈped(ə)nt/ **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*, perh. from the first element of L. *paedagogus* (see **PEDAGOGUE**).

pedantic /ˈpiːdantɪk/ **n.** **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.

– ORIGIN C16: back-form. from **PEDLAR**.

USAGE

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

peddler **n.** variant spelling of **PEDLAR**.

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

– DERIVATIVES **pederast** **n.** **pederastic** **adj.**

– ORIGIN C17: from mod. L. *paederastia*, from Gk *paiderastia*, from *pais*, *paid-* ‘boy’ + *erastēs* ‘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 Ital. *pedestallo*, from *piè* ‘foot’ + *di* ‘of’ + *stallo* ‘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. n. US spelling of **PAEDIATRICS**.

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

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

– DERIVATIVES **pedicellate** /-ˈdɪs(ə)leɪt/ **adj.**

– ORIGIN C17: from mod. L. *pedicellus* ‘small foot’, dimin. of *pes*, *ped-* ‘foot’.

pedicle /ˈpedɪk(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 /ˌpɪˌdɪkjʊˈləʊsɪs/ **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 **adj.** **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** **adj.**

– ORIGIN C16 (as *periment*): perh. an alt. of **PYRAMID**.

pedipalp /ˈpedɪpəlp, ˈpiːdɪpəlp/ **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 **pediary** **n.** (archaic).

– ORIGIN ME: perh. an alt. of synonymous dial. *pedder*, appar. from dial. *ped* ‘pannier’.

pedo⁻¹ **n.** **comb. form** US spelling of **PAEDO**.

pedo⁻² /ˈpedəʊ/ **n.** **comb. form** relating to soil or soil types: *pedogenic*.

– ORIGIN from Gk *pedon* ‘ground’.

pedogenic /ˌpedə(ɒ)ˈdʒenɪk/ **n.** **adj.** relating to or denoting processes occurring in soil or leading to the formation of soil.

pedology /ˌpɪˈdɒlədʒi, ˌpe-/ **n.** another term for **SOIL SCIENCE**.

– DERIVATIVES **pedological** /ˌpedəˈlɒdʒɪk(ə)l/ **adj.**

pedologist **n.**

pedometer /ˌpɪˈdɒmɪtə, ˌpe-/ **n.** an instrument for

vertebrate. ► informal a person's head or brain. ■ **v.** 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 thigh bones crossed below it as an emblem of piracy or death.

– DERIVATIVES **-skulled** adj.

– ORIGIN ME *scolle*; of unknown origin; cf. ON *skoltr*.

skullcap ■ **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.] **2** informal a contemptible person. **3** informal short for **SKUNKWEED**. ■ **v.** N. Amer. informal defeat or get the better of, especially by an overwhelming margin.

– ORIGIN C17: from Abnaki *segankw*.

skunk cabbage ■ **n.** a North American arum, the flower of which has a distinctive unpleasant smell. [*Lysichiton americanum* and *Symplocarpus foetidus*.]

skunkweed ■ **n.** cannabis of a variety which has a high concentration of narcotic agents.

skunkworks ■ **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 *Skonk Works*, an illegal still in the Li'l Abner comic strip.

sky ■ **n.** (pl. **skies**) (often **the sky**) the region of the atmosphere and outer space seen from the earth. ► literary heaven, or heavenly power. ■ **v.** (**skies**, **skying**, **skied**) informal hit (a ball) high into the air.

– PHRASES **the sky is the limit** there is practically no limit. **to the skies** very highly; enthusiastically. **under the open sky** out of doors.

– DERIVATIVES **skye** adj. **skyless** adj. **skyward** adj. & adv. **skywards** adv.

– ORIGIN ME, from ON *ský* 'cloud'.

sky blue ■ **n.** a bright clear blue.

sky-blue pink ■ **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 *Digāmbara* (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.** Cricket a hit which goes very high.

Skye 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 ■ **v.** hijack (an aircraft). ■ **n.** an act of sky-jacking.

– 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 horse-play.

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.

skylit (also **skylighted**) ■ **adj.** fitted with or lit by a skylight or skylights.

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

sky pilot ■ **n.** informal a clergyman.

skyr /skɪə/ ■ **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 /ˈskaɪseɪl, -s(ə)l/ ■ **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.** a very tall building of many storeys.

sky surfing ■ **n.** the sport of jumping from an aircraft and surfing through the air on a board before landing by parachute.

skywatch ■ **v.** 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 a mortuary. **3** a large, thick slice or piece of cake, bread, chocolate, etc. **4** an outer piece of timber sawn from a log. **5** 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.** **slabby** **adj.**

– ORIGIN ME: of unknown origin.

slabber chiefly Scottish & Irish ■ **v.** **1** dribble at the mouth; slaver. **2** splatter or splash. **3** chatter trivially. ■ **n.** a dribble of saliva.

– ORIGIN C16: rel. to dial. *slab* 'muddy place, puddle'.

slack¹ ■ **adj.** **1** not taut or held tightly in position; loose. **2** (of business or trade) not busy; quiet. **3** careless, lazy, or negligent. **4** W. Indian lewd or promiscuous. **5** (of a tide) neither ebbing nor flowing. ■ **n.** **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/up**) decrease in intensity or speed. **3** Brit. informal work slowly or lazily. **4** slake (lime).

– 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.

slack² ■ **n.** 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 matter separated from metals during the smelting or refining of ore. ► similar material produced by a volcano; scoria. **2** Brit. informal, derogatory a promiscuous woman. ► a contemptible or insignificant person. ■ **v.** (**slags**, **slagging**, **slagged**) **1** [usu. as noun **slagging**] produce deposits of slag. **2** (often **slag someone off**) Brit. informal criticize abusively.

– DERIVATIVES **slaggy** **adj.**