

Synonyms and Antonyms

What are Synonyms?

Synonyms are words which are used as substitutes for other words. Sometimes, synonyms need not mean exactly the same as the other word. They can also be a close substitute which means they can mean nearly the same as the other word.

Synonyms can belong to any word category:

Category	Word	Synonym	Synonym
Noun	Paramour	Lover	Beau
Adjective	Pleasing	Alluring	Fetching
Verb	Scan	Swindle	Deceive
Adverb	Candidly	Blatantly	Flagrantly

English is a language that has multiple influences. The socio-political history of England has helped shape the language into what it is today. Imperialism also had a big impact on the English language since the British took home new words from the countries they had colonised. Today, we have in English, words originating in Chinese, Sanskrit, Arabic and other colonial languages. It also has words that have originated in French, Spanish, German and Italian.

Word	Meaning	Language of Origin
Ketchup	A condiment	Chinese
Gung-ho	Enthusiastic	Chinese
Tycoon	An industrialist	Chinese
Gunny	A sack	Sanskrit
Juggernaut	An unstoppable object	Sanskrit
Mahout	Elephant rider	Sanskrit
Alcohol	An intoxicant	Arabic
Magazine	Storage	Arabic
Zenith	Highest point	Arabic
Gaffe	Mistake	French
Riposte	A sharp reply	French
Macabre	Gruesome	French
Incommunicado	Not communicating	Spanish
Bonanza	A profit, a rich find	Spanish
Armada	Fleet of ships	Spanish
Bravura	An act of bravery	Italian
Imbroglia	A big quarrel	Italian
Virtuoso	Someone who is skilled	Italian

Usage of Synonyms

Synonyms are used for the purpose of bringing variety in language. Apart from this, synonyms are also used to match **the register** and the **mode of communication**.

Neutral	Formal	Informal
Buy	Purchase	Get
Complete	Exhaustive	Whole-hog
TV	Television	Telly
Children	Offspring	Kids
Criminals	Offenders	Crooks
Stupid	Imbecile	Dumb
Tired of	Dissatisfied	Sick of
Parents	Progenitors	Folks

Synonyms are also used to distinguish speech from writing. Some words are preferable in writing, while some sound better in speech. Often, one reserves formal and sophisticated words for writing and casual words for speech.

Writing	Speech
Subsequently	Later
Alas!	Oh no!
In sum	To sum up
Awe-inspiring	Awesome
Recalibrated	Measured again
For (conjunction)	Because (conjunction)

Synonyms are also used to replace the archaic or obsolete words in the English language.

Archaic Word	Modern Counterpart
Behove	Responsibility
Brimstone	Sulphur
Dispraise	Criticise
Handmaid	Female servant
Meat	Any type of food
Scaramouch	A braggart
Wherefore	For what reason
Yonder	Over there
Smite	Conquer
Saturnism	Lead poisoning
Rede	Advice

Sometimes, a word does not do justice to the emotion behind it. The tone or the emotion behind a person's voice can also dictate which word has to be used.

- A. Mayuri was annoyed by the hotel staff's delay in the order.
B. Mayuri was indignant at the hotel staff's misbehaviour.

The words **annoyed** and **indignant** are synonyms. However, indignant is more intense and forceful than annoyed. A simple delay may make the subject annoyed, but misbehaviour is bound to cause indignation.

What are Antonyms?

In contrast with synonyms, **antonyms** are words which are opposite in meaning to the other. This may sound strange, but often, to understand a word better, we have to look at its antonym. We learn the meaning of the word by understanding how it contrasts with its antonym.

Like synonyms, there can be more than one antonym for a given word.

Category	Word	Antonym	Antonym
Noun	ally	foe	detractor
Adjective	bold	lily-livered	cowardly
Verb	sanctify	desecrate	ravage
Adverb	completely	inadequately	partially

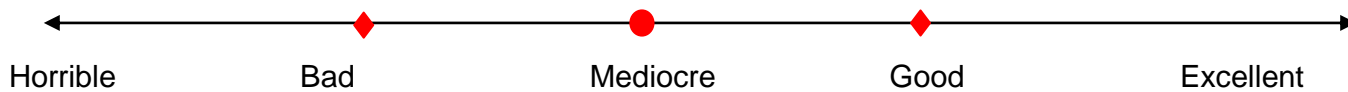
Types of Antonyms

There are three types of antonyms:

- Gradable antonyms
- Complementary antonyms
- Relational antonyms

Gradable Antonyms

Gradable antonyms are words which are the extreme opposites of each other. Imagine a spectrum or a scale. Gradable antonyms will be at equal distances from the centre on the scale. However, these words may have a spectrum of words between them. All these words may exist together on the same scale.



In the above example, **Horrible** is the polar opposite of the word **Excellent**. But together, they exist on the same spectrum as **Bad**, **Mediocre** and **Good**. Each word on the spectrum is an antonym of the other. For example, the word **Good** is the antonym of **Horrible**, **Bad**, **Mediocre** and **Excellent**.

loving	hateful	confident	overconfident	black	white
virtuous	impious	ancient	modern	billionaire	pauper

Complementary Antonyms

Unlike gradable antonyms which have a spectrum of words between them, complementary antonyms are words which express two extreme ideas without the possibility of 'middle' words. They do not lie on a continuous scale and are the exact opposites of each other.

complete	incomplete	unique	ordinary	flawless	blemished
dead	living	drunk	sober	unlimited	limited

Relational Antonyms

Relational antonyms are words which are opposite to each other by the virtue of their relationship alone. One finds meaning through the existence of the other. For example, the word **up** exists in relation to the word **down**.

grandparent	grandchildren	employee	employer	husband	wife
host	guest	predator	prey	perpetrator	victim

Synonyms and Antonyms

Word	Synonym			Antonym		
abominable (adj)	awful	abhorrent	execrable	attractive	likeable	appealing
adroit (adj)	skilful	proficient	adept	skilful	awkward	inept
aggression (n)	belligerence	offense	attack	retreat	calmness	befriending
amateur (n)	rookie	beginner	novice	professional	skilled	expert
amiable (adj)	friendly	cordial	charming	unfriendly	unsociable	hostile
antagonise (v)	anger	torment	affront	aid	help	please
antediluvian (adj)	old	ancient	prehistoric	modern	young	current

Word	Synonym			Antonym		
baffle (v)	confuse	confound	puzzle	clarify	explain	enlighten
baleful (adj)	deadly	sinister	evil	favourable	promising	good
balk (v)	hesitate	refuse	resist	accept	face	help
banal (adj)	boring	bland	mundane	exciting	original	uncommon
bedlam (n)	confusion	chaos	hubbub	calmness	order	harmony
benevolent (adj)	kind	giving	sympathetic	cruel	malevolent	hateful
cacophony (n)	noise	harshness	discord	euphony	silence	melody
cadaver (n)	corpse	dead body	carcass	the living	living being	-
candid (adj)	frank	honest	direct	biased	dishonest	lying
cantankerous (adj)	angry	cranky	snappy	cheerful	pleasant	friendly
charlatan (n)	fraud	con man	cheat	the honest	the genuine	the frank
clumsy (adj)	awkward	bulky	inept	expert	dexterous	adept
colossal (adj)	gigantic	huge	large	miniscule	tiny	microscopic
dapper (adj)	stylish	classy	prim	untidy	plain	shabby
detriment (n)	loss	disability	harm	advantage	aid	blessing
dilettante (n)	rookie	amateur	dabbler	veteran	experienced	expert
decadent (adj)	immoral	degraded	evil	pure	good	moral
dolorous (adj)	sad	mournful	painful	cheery	happy	positive
dubious (adj)	doubtful	uncertain	ambiguous	certain	clear	sure
eccentric (adj)	quirky	crazy	bizarre	common	simple	conventional
effervescent (adj)	spirited	bubbly	enthusiastic	flat	dull	stale
egregious (adj)	horrible	bad	intolerable	good	pleasant	mild

Word	Synonym			Antonym		
eloquence (n)	expressive	oration	articulation	muteness	dullness	tacit
emancipate (v)	free	liberate	release	bind	imprison	detain
fabricate (v)	fake	concoct	invent	tell truth	-	-
fallacy (n)	falsehood	untruth	deceit	truth	accuracy	fact
fetching (adj)	attractive	beautiful	pretty	ugly	awful	hideous
flamboyant (adj)	showy	colourful	flashy	dull	plain	modest
frail (adj)	delicate	fragile	dainty	strong	calloused	solid
frivolous (adj)	petty	shallow	childish	profound	deep	wise
gargantuan (adj)	colossal	huge	large	tiny	microscopic	miniscule
gaudy (adj)	bright	loud	flashy	modest	normal	plain
gregarious (adj)	friendly	social	affable	unfriendly	antisocial	rude
grandeur (n)	grandness	opulence	luxuriance	simplicity	modesty	dullness
habitual (adj)	addicted	chronic	accustomed	temporary	occasional	intermittent
halcyon (adj)	serene	harmonious	peaceful	chaotic	agitated	troubled
haughty (adj)	snobbish	egoistic	proud	humble	modest	shy
heinously (adv)	horribly	shockingly	brutally	kindly	peacefully	mildly
hinder (v)	stop	obstruct	impede	encourage	assist	aid
hone (v)	whet	sharpen	shape	dull	exhaust	tire
iconoclast (n)	sceptic	radical	rebel	believer	follower	devotee
idiosyncrasy (n)	eccentricity	whimsy	peculiarity	normality	regularity	routine
ignominy (n)	taint	disgrace	blot	honour	esteem	respect
impair (v)	damage	hurt	weaken	aid	assist	strengthen

Word	Synonym			Antonym		
jaunty (adj)	carefree	breezy	jovial	morose	dull	gloomy
jeer (v)	mock	taunt	ridicule	praise	adulate	compliment
jeopardy (n)	danger	threat	peril	assurance	safety	protection
jest (n)	banter	fun	gag	seriousness	gravity	sincerity
jettison (v)	abandon	discard	throw	keep	cherish	retain
jovial (adj)	happy	cheerful	sanguine	gloomy	maudlin	lachrymose
keen (adj)	interested	ardent	eager	nonchalant	apathetic	uninterested
kindle (v)	ignite	burn	inflame	extinguish	put out	snuff
laconic (adj)	brief	succinct	terse	wordy	verbose	prolix
lament (v)	grieve	complain	bemoan	praise	laud	compliment
lampoon (v)	mock	ridicule	jeer	flatter	praise	adulate
lethargy (n)	apathy	disinterest	dullness	energy	interest	liveliness
linger (v)	stay	remain	lag	move	leave	continue
lush (adj)	abundant	dense	green	barren	dry	dead
macabre (adj)	brutal	frightening	grisly	charming	pleasant	delightful
magnanimous (adj)	generous	charitable	benevolent	mean	petty	miserly
maelstrom (n)	agitation	chaos	turbulence	calm	harmony	peace
malleable (adj)	flexible	adaptable	supple	rigid	brittle	stiff
moribund (adj)	dying	doomed	fading	thriving	living	flourishing
nadir (n)	base	bottom	lowest point	zenith	top	summit
naive (adj)	innocent	childish	simple	artful	aware	wise
nebulous (adj)	vague	hazy	murky	bright	clear	certain

Word	Synonym			Antonym		
niche (n)	slot	compartment	corner	closure	-	-
nimble (adj)	skilled	agile	lithe	awkward	clumsy	inept
nonplussed (adj)	surprised	baffled	astounded	enlightened	bored	calm
obnoxious (adj)	unpleasant	repulsive	disgusting	pleasant	attractive	agreeable
obfuscate (v)	confuse	baffle	complicate	explain	clarify	simplify
odious (adj)	horrid	vile	foul	likeable	pleasant	delightful
ominous (adj)	threatening	dangerous	apocalyptic	encouraging	assuring	promising
onerous (adj)	difficult	laborious	arduous	easy	effortless	helpful
opulent (adj)	rich	lavish	decadent	impoverished	modest	economical
pacifist (n)	placater	appeaser	conciliator	agitator	instigator	radical
paradox (n)	contradiction	anomaly	mystery	normality	standard	regularity
peril (n)	jeopardy	danger	threat	safety	assurance	security
pithy (adj)	concise	terse	brief	wordy	lengthy	verbose
pristine (adj)	pure	unblemished	immaculate	impure	corrupt	blemished
quack (n)	charlatan	fraud	phony	genuine	sincere	true
quaint (adj)	old-fashioned	fancy	attractive	common	new	regular
quantum (n)	amount	sum	measure	whole	entirety	-
quixotic (adj)	fanciful	impractical	unrealistic	sensible	practical	realistic
raconteur (n)	storyteller	anecdotist	narrator	listener	audience	reader
ramification (n)	consequence	complication	effect	cause	source	origin
rapport (n)	agreement	vibe	friendship	disagreement	coldness	enmity
rational (adj)	practical	sensible	wise	careless	silly	illogical

Word	Synonym			Antonym		
refulgent (adj)	bright	glowing	brilliant	dull	dark	black
sacrosanct (adj)	sacred	holy	pious	profane	corrupt	sacrilegious
sagacious (adj)	wise	intelligent	knowing	ignorant	naive	moronic
savant (n)	expert	academic	intelligent	amateur	ignorant	dimwit
senile (adj)	aged	ancient	decrepit	alert	young	sane
scrupulously (adv)	carefully	meticulously	accurately	carelessly	precariously	recklessly
sedulously (adv)	actively	busily	diligently	irresolutely	weakly	unyieldingly
tactfully (adv)	skilfully	cautiously	deftly	indelicately	strongly	uncarefully
tangible (adj)	touchable	actual	solid	abstract	unreal	conceptual
tentative (adj)	temporary	unsettled	ad interim	certain	conclusive	definite
timid (adj)	fearful	weak	bashful	confident	brave	bold
turbid (adj)	unclear	muddy	ambiguous	clear	-	-
ubiquitous (adj)	omnipresent	common	pervasive	rare	scarce	uncommon
ulterior (adj)	secret	hidden	concealed	open	expressed	known
unabashed (adj)	blatant	brazen	audacious	concealed	silent	subtle
unassailable (adj)	unconquerable	powerful	invulnerable	weak	vulnerable	defenceless
unbridled (adj)	uncontrolled	unrestrained	unchecked	restrained	subdued	controlled
vacuous (adj)	stupid	dumb	moronic	aware	intelligent	knowing
vain (adj)	arrogant	boastful	conceited	humble	shy	modest
valour (n)	bravery	courage	grit	cowardice	timidity	weakness
vanguard (n)	leader	pioneer	-	follower	disciple	-
waive (v)	abandon	allow	defer	approve	continue	deny

Word	Synonym			Antonym		
wane (v)	dim	lessen	decrease	wax	increase	expand
weary (adj)	tired	fatigued	lethargic	energetic	spirited	buoyant
xenophobia (n)	bigotry	bias	prejudice	fairness	good will	tolerance
yielding (adj)	humble	compliant	docile	obstinate	rigid	inflexible
zeal (n)	enthusiasm	ardour	eagerness	apathy	indifference	neglect