**DICTIONARY-A WRITER’S LANGUAGE TOOL**

**TYPES OF DICTIONARIES**

Unabridged dictionaries are commonly found in libraries on dictionary stands. They comprehensively cover all words that are known at the time that they are printed. Check the date when looking for new words or slang expressions. Titles of common unabridged dictionaries are: • Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Ref PE 1625.W36) • Random House Dictionary

An abridged dictionary has been shortened by including only the most common words or the vocabulary of a group. For example, an abridged collegiate dictionary would have words needed by the average college student. Titles of common abridged dictionaries are: • Random House College edition • Webster's Collegiate Dictionary • Funk & Wagnall’s Standard College Dictionary • American Heritage Dictionary

A historical dictionary gives the etymology or derivation of words. A word at the time of Shakespeare may now have different meanings than then. Reading historical materials require using these specialized dictionaries. • Oxford English Dictionary • Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles • Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles some dictionaries emphasize certain aspects of the language. Slang includes popular expressions which may not be considered proper in formal use. Some slang may have vulgar, obscene or profane connotations. In academic settings formal language usually does not include slang or non-standard forms of expression. Usage guides will set the standards for formal writing or expression. A thesaurus is a dictionary that gives synonyms.

USING A DICTIONARY Remember that preliminary pages (first pages) often explain abbreviations and other special features. End pages may have tables or charts. The auxiliary pages (other pages) may also have information, such as a list of colleges or cities. A separate appendix may give geographical and biographical entries. The table of contents or list of illustrations will help locate information on these preliminary or auxiliary pages. Especially school textbooks may have a vocabulary or glossary section. Glossary is a list of technical words or expressions used in a field of study or book. As mentioned before, appendix or auxiliary sections of books may contain a glossary section. Dictionary order has become a synonym for alphabetical order

KINDS OF INFORMATION

Elementary students often are tested on their ability to use dictionaries. Team games can be used to develop skill with:

• Alphabetical order

• guide words

• Pronunciation

• Syllabication

• Derivation

• Etymology

• Synonyms

• Antonym

Guide words are placed at the top of a page to help the user find the correct page alphabetically. Pronunciation involves using various symbols to represent sounds. News broadcasting organizations may have development their own dictionaries for names of people and places. Syllabication shows how the word is divided when the word is separated at the end of a line of print. Derivation traces what root words are used to form the word. Understanding from which language the word comes helps explain differences in phonetic rules. "Goethe" may not seem to be pronounced the way it was spelled except to those who understand the German language. Our English language is a result of the many cultures from which it is drawn. Etymology is the study of the word's history including both derivation and how the word's usage has changed. Usage reflects how different areas use words in unique ways. Meaning or definition Synonyms (words is explained with the or shown through same meaning) and examples. Antonyms (words with the opposite meaning) also contribute to an accurate definition. Illustrative quotations, such as those from Shakespeare give insight into meaning and derivation. Maps and plates of illustration give pictures to provide reference points. For example, maps can show where Guam is located in relation to other islands. Geographical facts and history also give the significance of places. Guam was the site of a major battle in World War II. Biographical facts are needed because many words have origins in personal names. A "curie" is one word that is associated with the scientists who discovered it. A dictionary that contains geographical and biographical information is called an encyclopedic dictionary.

**PURCHASING A DICTIONARY** Check if your dictionary at minimum offers:

1. Publication date

2. Full definition and examplesionaries may have a separate section with geographical and biographical information.

3. Pronunciations (more than one)

4. Word class

5. Label (register)

**HISTORY AND VALUE**

William Caxton (c1483) produced a French-English dictionary. Travelers needed a bilingual dictionary when visiting countries with a different language than their own. Ancient writings were not useful until they could be translated. The discovery of the Rosetta stone in 1799 helped unlock many ancient languages. The stone was written in Greek and two forms of Egyptian. In 1822 the messages were finally deciphered. In 1755, Samuel Johnson produced the earliest English language dictionary. A facsimile reprint of this dictionary is available here at the McKay Library in the Reference collection. (Ref PE 1620.J6 1979) As a facsimile reprint, letters appear as they were written in 1755. Alternate spellings are given without preference. Some word derivation is shown. Noah Webster printed the first modern dictionary in 1828 which set the standard for spelling and pronunciation. His dictionaries also distinguished American word usage from usage common in England. Sir James Murray gathered historical background on words. The Oxford English Dictionary traces the origin of words and their usage through time with examples. While the British usage is emphasized, recent editions include English usage in other parts of the world. This dictionary is now available as an Internet subscription under

**CONCLUSION**

Dictionaries are important reference tools for writers to use. Different kinds of dictionaries are available for various needs.