

Research notes

- Born
- Childhood
- Novels

evidence

initial  
ideas

# Using a Thesaurus



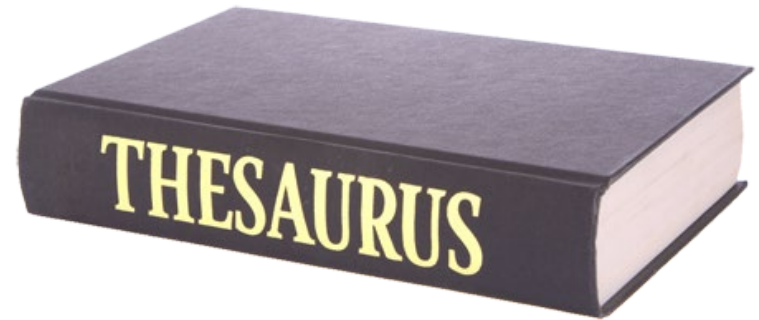
# What is a thesaurus?



# Why is it useful to use a thesaurus?

A **synonym** is a word that has the same or a similar meaning to another word. For example, 'kind', 'lovely' and 'pleasant' are all synonyms of 'nice'.

A thesaurus gives you a variety of synonyms for different words. Synonyms can make your writing more interesting and varied because they help you to avoid repeating the same words.



Using a thesaurus is a great way to widen your **vocabulary**, i.e. increase the number of words that you know!

**Why do you think it is important to have a wide vocabulary?**

# Widening your vocabulary

There are a number of reasons why it is useful to have a wide vocabulary.

- Your written English will improve if you know more words, because you will have new ways of saying what you want to say!
- Using a wider range of words will make your writing more interesting to readers.
- When analyzing books you read, you may be asked to talk about the word choices that authors have made. Having a wide vocabulary will help you to do this.

# An entry in a thesaurus

A thesaurus is usually organized alphabetically like a dictionary. Each word will have a list of its synonyms next to it. Look at this entry for the word 'exceptional'.

The class of the word is given.

The entry shows you how the word is used.

**Entry Word:** exceptional

**Function:** *adjective*

**Meaning:** being out of the ordinary <an *exceptional* amount of snow fell in March>

**Synonyms:** aberrant, abnormal, atypical, extraordinary, freak, odd, peculiar, phenomenal, rare, singular, uncommon, uncustomary, unique, unusual, unwonted

**Related Words:** conspicuous, notable, noticeable, outstanding, prominent, remarkable, salient, striking; bizarre, deviant, eccentric, outlandish, quaint, strange, weird; incomprehensible, inconceivable, incredible, unimaginable, unthinkable

**Near Antonyms:** everyday, familiar, frequent

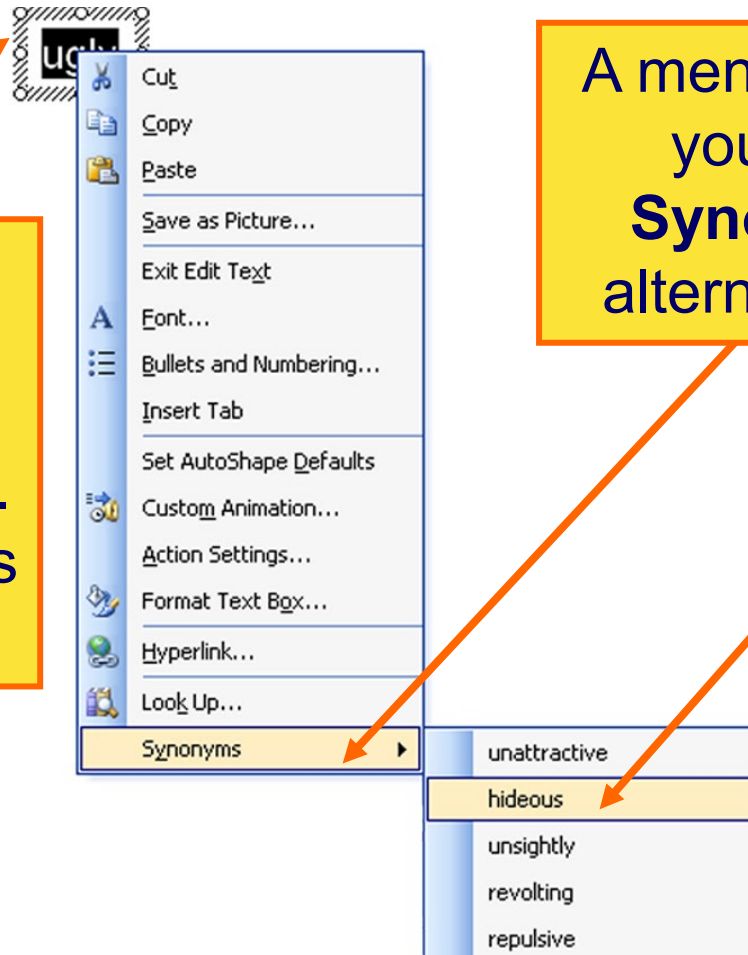
Antonyms common, customary, normal, ordinary, typical, unexceptional, usual

A thesaurus will also give you some words that mean the *opposite* of the word you are looking up.

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As well as using a 'hard copy' thesaurus, you might also like to work with the thesaurus on your computer.

Right-click on the word you want to replace with a synonym. The word here is 'ugly'.



A menu will appear, where you can click on the **Synonyms** tag to view alternative word choices.

If you click on a word, it will replace the original word in the document.

# Identifying synonyms

**Cold**

**Hot**

Are these words synonyms for 'hot' or 'cold'? Drag each one to the correct column.  
Press **start** to begin.

**start**

fervent

**solve**



# Match the words to their synonyms!



Match up each word on the top row with its synonym on the bottom row.

show all

solve





# Find the synonyms!



Use a thesaurus to find as many synonyms as you can for these words. (You should look for the word classes given.)

**Did you find these synonyms?**

<b>brave (adj.)</b>	courageous, valiant, heroic
<b>strength (n.)</b>	power, vigor, might
<b>climb (v.)</b>	ascend, scale, clamber
<b>repeatedly (adv.)</b>	constantly, again and again, continually
<b>disgust (n.)</b>	revulsion, aversion, loathing
<b>disgust (v.)</b>	sicken, repulse, appall



Read the following piece of text and then try rewriting it, using a thesaurus to make it sound more interesting. Then press the **play** button to reveal a new version of the text, where some of the words have been replaced. How does it compare to your version? Press **start** to begin.

**start**



**Write a short description and swap it with a partner.  
Use a thesaurus to improve your descriptions.**

Experimenting with synonyms can add interest to your writing, but be careful not to use too many. This could make your writing sound overblown and melodramatic!

- When using a thesaurus, try not to pick too many long or excessively descriptive words.
- Make sure you also use the synonyms you find in the correct context – check in a dictionary if you are not sure of the correct meaning of a word.

