

Oxford Primary Thesaurus

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How to use your thesaurus



Writing tips

help you write creatively by suggesting ways to describe how things look, move or sound

literary quotation

shows you how an author has used a word in a story or poem

highlighted letter

shows you which letter you are on

alphabet

on every page to help you find your way around the thesaurus easily

numbered sense

if a word has more than one meaning, they are numbered



Word web

gives words that are related to the headword and are useful for project work and story writing

cross reference

points you to another headword in this thesaurus where you will find further useful words or information



Overused word

offers more interesting alternatives for common words such as **big**, **bit**, **happy**, **nice** and **sad**

bird to bit

A	SEA AND WATER BIRDS:
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • albatross, auk, bittern, coot, cormorant, crane, curlew, duck, gannet, goose, guillemot, gull, heron, kingfisher, kittiwake, lapwing, mallard, moorhen, oystercatcher, peewit, pelican, penguin, puffin, seagull, snipe, stork, swan, teal
C	BIRDS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES:
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bird of paradise, budgerigar, canary, cockatoo, flamingo, hummingbird, ibis, kookaburra, macaw, mynah bird, parakeet, parrot, toucan
E	BIRDS WHICH CANNOT FLY:
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emu, kiwi, ostrich, peacock, penguin
G	PARTS OF A BIRD'S BODY:
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beak, bill, claw, talon, breast, crown, throat, crest, feather, down, plumage, plume, wing <p>see also feather</p>
I	SOME TYPES OF BIRD HOME:
J	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nest, nesting box, aviary, coop, roost
K	SOUNDS MADE BY BIRDS:
L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cackle, caw, cheep, chirp, chirrup, cluck, coo, crow, gabble, honk, peep, pipe, quack, screech, squawk, trill, tweet, twitter, warble <p>A turkey gobbles. An owl hoots.</p>
M	SPECIAL NAMES:
N	<p>A female peacock is a peahen. A young duck is a duckling. A young goose is a gosling. A young puffin is a puffling. A young swan is a cygnet. An eagle's nest is an eyrie. A place where rooks nest is a rookery. for groups of birds see group</p>
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WRITING TIPS

You can use these words to describe a bird:

TO DESCRIBE HOW A BIRD MOVES:

- circle, dart, flit, flutter, fly, glide, hop, hover, peck, perch, preen, skim, soar, swoop, waddle, wheel

The post owls arrived, swooping down through rain-flecked windows, scattering everyone with droplets of water.—HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE, J. K. Rowling

TO DESCRIBE A BIRD'S FEATHERS:

- bedraggled, downy, drab, fluffy, gleaming, iridescent, ruffled, smooth, speckled

The peacock displayed its iridescent tail.

OVERUSED WORD

Try to vary the words you use for bit. Here are some other words you could use.

FOR A LARGE BIT OF SOMETHING:

- chunk, lump, hunk, wedge, slab

And they all went over to the tunnel entrance and began scooping out great chunks of juicy, golden-coloured peach flesh.—JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH, Road Dahl

FOR A SMALL BIT OF SOMETHING:

- fragment, scrap, chip, particle, speck, sliver, pinch, touch, dab, atom, iota

(informal) smidgen
The map was drawn on a scrap of old paper.

label

tells you that certain synonyms are only for *informal* or *formal* use

guide words

show the first and last word on a page

special synonyms

words that are similar in meaning to the headword, but can only be used in special cases

headword

is in blue; it is the word you look up and is in alphabetical order

synonyms

words that mean the same, or nearly the same, as the headword

example sentence

shows you how you might use a word; each meaning of a word has a separate example

word class

tells you what type of word it is, for example *NOUN*, *VERB*, *ADJECTIVE* or *ADVERB*

bite to blaze

FOR A BIT OF FOOD:

- morsel, crumb, bite, nibble, taste, mouthful
- Please try a morsel of chocolate mousse.*

FOR A BIT OF LIQUID:

- drop, dash, dribble, splash, spot
- Add a splash of vinegar to the sauce.*

bite *VERB* bites, biting, bit, bitten

- 1 I bit a chunk out of my apple.
 - munch, nibble, chew, crunch, gnaw
(informal) chomp
for other ways to eat see **eat**
 - 2 Take care. These animals can bite.
 - nip, pinch, pierce, wound
- When an animal tries to bite you it snaps at you.
When an insect bites you it stings you.
A fierce animal mauls or savages its prey.

bitter *ADJECTIVE*

- 1 The medicine had a bitter taste.
 - sour, sharp, acid, acrid, tart
 - 2 His brother was still bitter about the quarrel.
 - resentful, embittered, disgruntled, aggrieved
 - 3 The wind blowing in from the sea was bitter.
 - biting, cold, freezing, icy, piercing, raw, wintry
- (informal) perishing
(OPPOSITE) mild

bizarre *ADJECTIVE*

- 'Whiskers' is a bizarre name for a goldfish!
- odd, strange, peculiar, weird, extraordinary, outlandish
- (OPPOSITE) ordinary

black *ADJECTIVE, NOUN*

- The pony had a shiny black coat.
- coal-black, jet-black, pitch-black, ebony, raven

You can also describe a black night as pitch-dark. Someone in a bad mood is said to look as black as thunder. Common similes are as black as coal and as black as night.

blame *VERB*

- Don't blame me if you miss the bus.
- accuse, criticise, condemn, reproach, scold

bland *ADJECTIVE*

- This cheese has a really bland taste.
- mild, dull, weak, insipid
- (OPPOSITES) strong, pungent

blank *ADJECTIVE*

- 1 There are no blank pages left in my jotter.
 - empty, bare, clean, plain, unmarked, unused
- 2 The old woman gave us a blank look.
 - expressionless, faceless, vacant

blank *NOUN*

- Fill in the blanks to complete the sentence.
- space, break, gap

blanket *NOUN*

- 1 The baby was wrapped in a woollen blanket.
 - cover, sheet, quilt, rug, throw
- 2 A blanket of snow covered the lawn.
 - covering, layer, film, sheet, mantle

blast *NOUN*

- 1 A blast of cold air came through the door.
 - gust, rush, draught, burst
- 2 They heard the blast of a trumpet.
 - blare, noise, roar
- 3 Many people were injured in the blast.
 - explosion, shock

blatant *ADJECTIVE*

- Do you expect me to believe such a blatant lie?
- barefaced, flagrant, obvious, shameless, brazen, unabashed

blaze *NOUN*

- Firefighters fought the blaze for hours.
- fire, flames, inferno

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opposite

words that are opposite in meaning to the headword; they are also called **antonyms**

A **ample** ADJECTIVE

① *The car has an ample boot.*

- big, large, spacious, roomy

OPPOSITE small

C ② *We had an ample supply of food.*

- abundant, plentiful, generous, substantial, considerable, profuse, lavish, liberal

OPPOSITE meagre

E ③ *No more juice, thanks—that's ample.*

- plenty, sufficient, lots, more than enough (informal) heaps, masses, loads, stacks

OPPOSITE insufficient

H **amuse** VERB

I think this joke will amuse you.

- make you laugh, entertain, cheer up, divert

(informal) tickle

K **amusement** NOUN

① *What's your favourite amusement?*

- pastime, recreation, entertainment, diversion, game, hobby, interest, leisure activity, sport

② *We tried not to show our amusement.*

- merriment, hilarity, laughter, mirth

P **amusing** ADJECTIVE

I didn't find his jokes very amusing.

- funny, witty, humorous, comic, comical, hilarious, diverting, entertaining

OPPOSITES unamusing, serious

S **analyse** VERB

We analysed the results of our experiment.

- examine, study, investigate, scrutinise

V **ancestor** NOUN

Our family's ancestors came from France.

- forebear, forefather, predecessor

OPPOSITE descendant

Y **ancestry** NOUN

She was proud of her African ancestry.

- origins, descent, heredity, heritage, blood, extraction, pedigree, stock

ancient ADJECTIVE

① *Does that ancient camera still work?*

- old, old-fashioned, antiquated, out of date, obsolete

② *In ancient times, our ancestors were hunters.*

- early, primitive, prehistoric, remote, long past, olden

The times before written records were kept are prehistoric times.

The ancient Greeks and Romans lived in classical times.

OPPOSITES modern, contemporary

see also **museum**, **pyramid**

anger NOUN

I was filled with anger when I read her letter.

- rage, fury, indignation, ire

(old use) wrath

An outburst of anger is a **tantrum** or a **fit of temper**.

anger VERB

His cruelty towards his dog angered me.

- enrage, infuriate, incense, madden, annoy, irritate, exasperate, antagonise, provoke

(informal) make your blood boil, make you see red

OPPOSITE pacify

angle NOUN

① *He wore a top hat set at a slight angle.*

- slope, slant, tilt

② *Let's look at the problem from a different angle.*

- viewpoint, point of view, perspective

angry ADJECTIVE

Miss Potts turns purple when she gets angry.

- cross, furious, enraged, infuriated, irate, livid, annoyed, incensed, exasperated, fuming, indignant, raging, seething

(informal) mad

(old use) wrathful

To become angry and lose control is to **lose your temper**.

OPPOSITE calm

angry ADJECTIVE



WRITING TIPS

SOMEONE WHO GETS ANGRY MIGHT:

- blow a fuse, blow their top, fly off the handle, have a face like thunder, have steam coming out of their ears, hit the roof, see red

Well, that did it! I saw red. And before I was able to stop myself, I did something I never meant to do. I PUT THE MAGIC FINGER ON THEM ALL!—THE MAGIC FINGER, Roald Dahl

for things an angry person might say see **exclamation**

animal NOUN

Wild animals roam freely in the safari park.

- creature, beast, brute



WORD WEB

A word for wild animals in general is **wildlife**.
A scientific word for animals is **fauna**.

VARIOUS KINDS OF ANIMAL:

- amphibian, arachnid, bird, fish, insect, invertebrate, mammal, marsupial, mollusc, reptile, rodent, vertebrate

An animal that eats meat is a **carnivore**.

An animal that eats plants is a **herbivore**.

An animal that eats many things is an **omnivore**.

Animals that sleep most of the winter are **hibernating animals**.

Animals that are active at night are **nocturnal animals**.

SOME ANIMALS THAT LIVE ON LAND:

- aardvark, anteater, antelope, ape, armadillo, baboon, badger, bat, bear, beaver, bison, boar, buffalo, camel, cheetah, chimpanzee, chinchilla, chipmunk, deer, dormouse, echidna, elephant, elk, fox, gazelle, gibbon, giraffe,

gnu, gorilla, grizzly bear, hare, hedgehog, hippopotamus or (*informal*) hippo, hyena, jackal, jaguar, kangaroo, koala, lemming, lemur, leopard, lion, llama, lynx, meerkat, mongoose, monkey, moose, mouse, ocelot, opossum, orangutan, otter, panda, pangolin, panther, platypus, polar bear, porcupine, rabbit, rat, reindeer, rhinoceros or (*informal*) rhino, skunk, snow leopard, squirrel, stoat, tapir, tiger, vole, wallaby, warthog, weasel, wildebeest, wolf, wolverine, wombat, yak, zebra
for animals commonly kept as pets see **pet, amphibian, bird, fish, insect, reptile**

SOME ANIMALS THAT LIVE IN THE SEA:

- dolphin, killer whale or orca, manatee or sea cow, narwhal, porpoise, seal, sea lion, walrus, whale

SOME EXTINCT ANIMALS:

- dinosaur, dodo, mammoth, quagga, sabre-toothed cat or smilodon
see also **dinosaur**

PARTS OF AN ANIMAL'S BODY:

- antler, claw, fang, foreleg, hind leg, hoof, horn, jaws, mane, muzzle, paw, snout, tail, trotter, tusk, whisker, fur, coat, fleece, hide, pelt

MALE AND FEMALE ANIMALS:

A male elephant or whale is a **bull** and a female is a **cow**.

A male fox is a **dog** and a female is a **vixen**.

A male goat is a **billy goat** and a female is a **nanny goat**.

A male hare or rabbit is a **buck** and a female is a **doe**.

A male horse is a **stallion** and a female is a **mare**.

A female lion is a **lioness**.

A female pig is a **sow**.

A male sheep is a **ram** and a female is a **ewe**.

A female tiger is a **tigress**.

A male wolf is a **dog** and a female is a **bitch**.
see also **cat, cattle, deer, dog**

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blustery *ADJECTIVE*

It was a typical, blustery day in autumn.

B

- gusty, windy, blowy, squally

OPPOSITE calm

C

D

board *NOUN*

The tabletop was made from a wooden board.

E

- plank, panel, beam, timber

*for board games see **game***

F

board *VERB*

We boarded the plane for New York.

G

- get on, enter, embark

H

boast *VERB*

The knight was always boasting about his fencing skills.

I

- brag, show off, crow, gloat, swagger

(informal) blow your own trumpet

J

K

boastful *ADJECTIVE*

Giants are boastful creatures and brag about everything.

L

- arrogant, big-headed, conceited, vain, bumptious

(informal) cocky, swanky

M

OPPOSITES modest, humble

N

O

boat *NOUN*

Several fishing boats were moored in the harbour.

P

- ship, craft, vessel

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WORD WEB

SOME TYPES OF BOAT OR SHIP:

- barge, canoe, catamaran, cruise liner, dhow, dinghy, dugout, ferry, freighter, gondola, hovercraft, hydrofoil, junk, kayak, launch, lifeboat, motorboat, oil tanker, punt, raft, rowing boat, schooner, skiff, speedboat, steamship, tanker, trawler, tug, yacht

MILITARY BOATS OR SHIPS:

- aircraft carrier, battleship, destroyer, frigate, gunboat, minesweeper, submarine, warship

SOME BOATS USED IN THE PAST:

- brigantine, clipper, coracle, cutter, galleon, galley, longship, man-of-war, paddle steamer, schooner, trireme, windjammer

WORDS FOR PARTS OF A BOAT OR SHIP:

- boom, bridge, bulwark, cabin, crow's nest, deck, engine room, funnel, galley, helm, hull, keel, mast, poop, porthole, propeller, quarterdeck, rigging, rudder, sail, tiller

SPECIAL NAMES:

The front part of a boat is the **bow** or **prow**.
The back part of a boat is the **stern**.

The part below deck where the crew live is called the **fo'c'sle**.

The left-hand side of a boat is called **port**.

The right-hand side of a boat is called **starboard**.

A shed where boats are stored is a **boathouse**.



WRITING TIPS

You can use these words to describe how a boat moves:

- cut through the waves or water, drift, float, glide, lurch, pitch, roll, sail, steam, tack

So the boat was left to drift down the stream as it would, till it glided gently in among the waving rushes.—ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS, Lewis Carroll

bob *VERB*

A plastic duck bobbed up and down in the water.

- bounce, dance, toss, wobble

body *NOUN*



WORD WEB

The study of the human body is **anatomy**.

The main part of your body except your head, arms and legs is your **trunk** or **torso**.

The shape of your body is your **build**, **figure** or **physique**.

The dead body of a person is a **corpse**.

The dead body of an animal is a **carcass**.

OUTER PARTS OF THE HUMAN BODY:

• abdomen, ankle, arm, armpit, breast, buttocks, calf, cheek, chest, chin, ear, elbow, eye, finger, foot, forehead, genitals, groin, hand, head, heel, hip, instep, jaw, knee, kneecap, knuckle, leg, lip, mouth, navel, neck, nipple, nose, pores, shin, shoulder, skin, stomach, temple, thigh, throat, waist, wrist

INNER PARTS OF THE HUMAN BODY:

• arteries, bladder, bowels, brain, eardrum, glands, gullet, gums, guts, heart, intestines, kidneys, larynx, liver, lung, muscles, nerves, ovaries, pancreas, prostate, sinews, stomach, tendons, tongue, tonsil, tooth, uterus, veins, windpipe, womb
for bones in your body see **bone**
for parts of animal bodies see **animal**



WRITING TIPS

You can use these words to describe a person's body:

TO DESCRIBE A LARGE, HEAVY OR STRONG BODY:

• athletic, beefy, brawny, burly, dumpy, fat, hefty, hulking, muscular, sinewy, squat, stocky, stout, thickset, flabby, plump, rotund, well-rounded
Aunt Agatha was a stout woman, and Stella thought the outfit made her look rather like a giant violet frog.—THE POLAR BEAR EXPLORERS' CLUB, Alex Bell

TO DESCRIBE A SMALL OR WEAK BODY:

• petite, short, slender, slight, slim, svelte, thin, bony, gangly, gaunt, lanky, tall, puny, scraggy, scrawny, skinny, spindly, wiry
Hiccup was just absolutely average, the kind of unremarkable, skinny, freckled boy who was easy to overlook in a crowd.—HOW TO BE A PIRATE, Cressida Cowell

bog NOUN

We felt our boots sinking into the bog.

• swamp, quagmire, quicksand, fen

boil VERB

① *Would you like your egg boiled or fried?*
for ways to cook food see **cook**

② *The water must be boiling before you add the pasta.*

• bubble, seethe, steam

bold ADJECTIVE

① *It was a bold move to attack the fortress.*

• brave, courageous, daring, adventurous, audacious, confident, enterprising, fearless, heroic, valiant, intrepid, plucky

OPPOSITE cowardly

② *The poster uses large letters in bold colours.*

• striking, strong, bright, loud, showy, conspicuous, eye-catching, noticeable, prominent

OPPOSITES inconspicuous, subtle

bolt VERB

① *Did you remember to bolt the door?*

• fasten, latch, lock, secure, bar

② *The horses bolted when they heard the thunder.*

• dash away, dart, flee, sprint, run away, rush off

③ *Don't bolt your food.*

• gobble, gulp, guzzle, wolf down

for other ways to eat see **eat**

bond NOUN

① *The prisoner tried to escape from his bonds.*

• chains, fetters, ropes, handcuffs, manacles, shackles, restraints

② *There was a special bond between the twins.*

• attachment, connection, tie, link, relationship

bone NOUN



WORD WEB

The bones of your body are your skeleton.

SOME BONES IN THE HUMAN BODY:

• backbone or spine, collarbone, cranium or skull, pelvis, ribs, shoulder blade, vertebrae

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WRITING TIPS

You can use these words to describe food:

TO DESCRIBE HOW IT LOOKS OR FEELS:

• chewy, creamy, crispy, crumbly, crunchy, doughy, dry, flaky, greasy, juicy, leathery, lumpy, milky, mushy, rubbery, runny, slimy, sloppy, smooth, soggy, soupy, spongy, sticky, stodgy, stringy, syrupy, velvety, watery (informal) gooeey

Stella was delighted to see that they were having ice cream, complete with sprinkles, fudge sticks and gooeey chocolate toffee sauce.—THE POLAR BEAR EXPLORERS' CLUB, Alex Bell

TO DESCRIBE HOW IT TASTES:

• bitter, bland, fiery, flavoursome, fresh, fruity, hot, mellow, mild, peppery, piquant, pungent, refreshing, salty, savoury, sharp, sour, spicy, strong, sugary, sweet, syrupy, tangy, tart, vinegary

The sauce was hot, but not too spicy. for ways to describe how food smells see smell

TO DESCRIBE FOOD YOU LIKE:

• appetising, delicious, luscious, mouthwatering, tasty, tempting, well-cooked (informal) scrummy, scrumptious, scrumdiddlyumptious, yummy
Something especially tasty to eat is a delicacy or titbit.

'Fleshlumpeater says he is never eating queen and he thinks perhaps she has an especially scrumdiddlyumptious flavour.' 'How dare he!' *Sophie cried.*—THE BFG, Roald Dahl

TO DESCRIBE FOOD YOU DON'T LIKE:

• disgusting, flavourless, indigestible, inedible, nauseating, stomach-turning, tasteless, unappetising, uneatable; charred, mouldy, overcooked, stale, undercooked (informal) yucky

Measle didn't think the food was very good. The stew was watery and tasteless and the vegetables were soggy and overcooked. —MEASLE AND THE DOOMPIT, Ian Ogilvy

fool NOUN

① *Only a fool would believe that ridiculous story.*

• idiot, buffoon, clown, halfwit, dimwit, dunce, simpleton, blockhead, clot, dunderhead, imbecile, moron, ass (informal) twit, chump, nitwit, nincompoop

② (historical) *The king's fool entertained the court.*

• jester, clown

fool VERB

The spy fooled everyone with his disguises.

• deceive, trick, mislead, hoax, dupe, hoodwink (informal) con, kid, have you on, take you in, pull the wool over your eyes

➤ **to fool about** or **around**

We were told not to fool about in the swimming pool.

• play about, mess about, misbehave

foolish ADJECTIVE

It would be foolish to stand too close to the lions.

• stupid, silly, idiotic, senseless, ridiculous, nonsensical, unwise, ill-advised, half-witted, unintelligent, absurd, crazy, mad, hare-brained (informal) daft

OPPOSITE sensible

foot NOUN

① *Rhona walked on the sand in her bare feet.*

The foot of an animal that has claws is a paw.

The foot of a cow, deer or horse is a hoof.

A pig's foot is a trotter.

A bird's feet are its claws.

The feet of a bird of prey are its talons.

② *We set up camp at the foot of the mountain.*

• base, bottom

football NOUN



WORD WEB

Football is also known as soccer.

Someone who plays football is a footballer.

Football is played on a field or pitch in a ground, park or stadium.

MEMBERS OF A FOOTBALL TEAM:

- captain, defender, full back, forward, goalkeeper or (*informal*) goalie, midfielder, striker, substitute, sweeper, winger

OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED IN FOOTBALL:

- ballboy or ballgirl, coach, linesman, manager, referee

SOME MOVES A FOOTBALLER MIGHT MAKE:

- chip, dribble, dummy, header, kick, mazy run, miss, pass, score, shot, tackle, volley for ways to hit or kick a ball see **ball**

SOME OTHER TERMS USED IN FOOTBALL:

- corner, crossbar, deflection, dugout, equaliser, extra time, final whistle, foul, free kick, goal, goalposts, half-time, kick-off, net, offside, penalty, penalty shoot-out, red or yellow card, sending off, throw-in

footprint NOUN

We followed the *footprints* in the snow.

- footmark, track, print

The tracks left by an animal are also called a spoor.

footstep NOUN

I heard *footsteps* crunching up the garden path.

- step, footfall, tread

forbidden ADJECTIVE

Skateboarding is *forbidden* in the playground.

- banned, barred, prohibited, disallowed, outlawed

OPPOSITE allowed

forbidding ADJECTIVE

The haunted tower had a dark, *forbidding* look.

- gloomy, grim, menacing, ominous, stern, threatening, unfriendly, unwelcoming

OPPOSITE friendly

force NOUN

① The firefighters had to use *force* to open the door.

- strength, power, might, muscle, vigour, effort, energy

② The *force* of the explosion broke all the windows.

- impact, effect, shock, intensity

③ The soldiers are part of a *peace-keeping force*.

- group, unit, team, corps, army, troops

force VERB

① The slaves were *forced* to work in the mines.

- compel, make, order, require, oblige, pressurise, coerce

② The king *forced* a new law upon the country.

- impose, inflict

③ The firefighters had to *force* the door.

- break open, burst open, prise open, smash, wrench (*informal*) yank

forceful ADJECTIVE

My great aunt has a very *forceful* personality.

- strong, powerful, dynamic, commanding, assertive, overbearing

OPPOSITE weak

forecast NOUN

The weather *forecast* is for snow tomorrow.

- outlook, prediction

forecast VERB forecasts, forecasting, forecast or forecasted

Snow has been *forecast* for Tuesday.

- foresee, foretell, predict

foreground NOUN

I took a photo of our house with my mum in the *foreground*.

- front

OPPOSITE background

foreign ADJECTIVE

① Lots of *foreign* tourists visit Edinburgh in the summer.

- overseas, international

OPPOSITES native, domestic

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Become a Word Explorer

You don't need a map and a compass to be an explorer. You can explore the world of **words** equipped with your thesaurus.

For example, you can:

- explore the differences between **synonyms**
- explore effects like **simile** and **alliteration**
- explore ways to **build words**
- explore ideas to improve your **stories** and other kinds of writing.

Use the following pages to help you.

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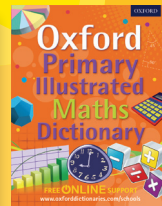
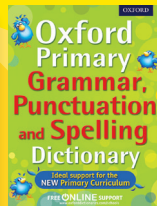
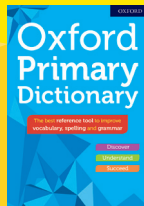
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