

# 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 |

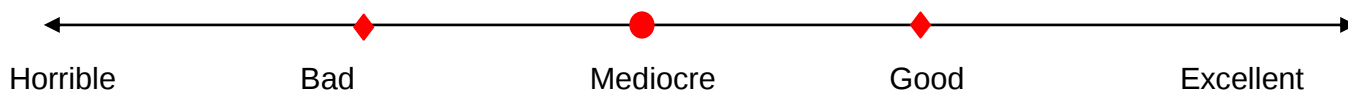
## Types of Antonyms

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    |