



Merriam-Webster's Concise Dictionary of English Usage

By Merriam-Webster



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Editorial Review

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Merriam-Webster's Concise Dictionary of English Usage is a dictionary. It is not a usage guide. It is not Fowler, or Partridge, or Bernstein (nor, at 799 pages, is it exactly concise, but that's another matter). Unlike those eminent watchdogs of the English language, the editors of this volume are record-keepers, chronicling the way language is used, not the way it should be used. Based on *Merriam Webster's Dictionary of English Usage*, this book cites the classic English-language specialists generously but finds its true course by observing actual contemporary usage. Take the word *discomfit*, for example, the meaning of which (to thwart, foil, or frustrate) is staunchly defended in many usage guides. Sorry, says Merriam-Webster. Their survey says that the use of the word as a synonym to *discomfort* is so entrenched as to have become "thoroughly established" as the most prevalent meaning. Though the editors of this book are more reporters than campaigners, their prose is eminently readable, charming, and even, like that of the best usage enforcers, quirky. For instance, the word *data*, they claim, is a "queer fish," while *errata* "leads a double life," and *yclept* is "peculiar-looking." --Jane Steinberg

About the Author

For more than 150 years, in print and now online, Merriam-Webster has been America's leading and most-trusted provider of language information. All Merriam-Webster products and services are backed by the largest team of professional dictionary editors and writers in America, and one of the largest in the world.

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