

# **“The Power of Words”**

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- How Many Words Do You Need? Do You Know?

# English Vocabulary Statistics

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1. How many different words **exist** in English?
2. How many different words do you **need**?
3. How many different words do you **know**?

# How many words **exist** in English?

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The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)

**616,500 entries**

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The OED + all technical, scientific,  
commercial, and specialised  
dictionaries and glossaries

**ca. 2,000,000 words\***

NUMBER OF  
DIFFERENT WORDS\*  
APPEARING IN DIFFERENT  
PUBLICATIONS

OVER A 12-MONTH PERIOD

\* HOW MANY WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE?

"There is no single sensible answer to this question.  
It's difficult to count the number of words in a language  
because it's challenging to determine what actually qualifies as a word.

The noun 'dog' refers to an animal, and the verb means 'to follow  
persistently' ('beharrlich verfolgen'). But is 'dog-tired' a word, or are  
these just two words joined together? Similarly, is 'hot dog' two words,  
or one? It can also be written as 'hot-dog' or even 'hotdog.'"

SCIENTIFIC  
AMERICAN

100,000+

Harvard Business Review

FT FINANCIAL TIMES

80,000

FORTUNE  
TIME

50,000

*The Washington Post*

DAILY EXPRESS

20,000

Sun

15,000



8,000

1,000

- |                                         |                                           |                                             |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 01 <input type="checkbox"/> time        | 26 <input type="checkbox"/> satisfaction  | 51 <input type="checkbox"/> eavesdrop       |
| 02 <input type="checkbox"/> world       | 27 <input type="checkbox"/> inherit       | 52 <input type="checkbox"/> blurb           |
| 03 <input type="checkbox"/> money       | 28 <input type="checkbox"/> turnover      | 53 <input type="checkbox"/> voracious       |
| 04 <input type="checkbox"/> important   | 29 <input type="checkbox"/> precious      | 54 <input type="checkbox"/> exorbitant      |
| 05 <input type="checkbox"/> decision    | 30 <input type="checkbox"/> fortunately   | 55 <input type="checkbox"/> lampoon         |
| 06 <input type="checkbox"/> understand  |                                           | 56 <input type="checkbox"/> gregarious      |
| 07 <input type="checkbox"/> explain     | 31 <input type="checkbox"/> imminent      | 57 <input type="checkbox"/> assiduous       |
| 08 <input type="checkbox"/> success     | 32 <input type="checkbox"/> indigenous    | 58 <input type="checkbox"/> moniker         |
| 09 <input type="checkbox"/> difference  | 33 <input type="checkbox"/> attain        | 59 <input type="checkbox"/> tetchy          |
| 10 <input type="checkbox"/> attempt     | 34 <input type="checkbox"/> reluctantly   | 60 <input type="checkbox"/> teetotal        |
|                                         | 35 <input type="checkbox"/> beneficiary   |                                             |
| 11 <input type="checkbox"/> immediately | 36 <input type="checkbox"/> vacancy       | 61 <input type="checkbox"/> curmudgeon      |
| 12 <input type="checkbox"/> memory      | 37 <input type="checkbox"/> purchaser     | 62 <input type="checkbox"/> malodorous      |
| 13 <input type="checkbox"/> beautiful   | 38 <input type="checkbox"/> sibling       | 63 <input type="checkbox"/> plenipotentiary |
| 14 <input type="checkbox"/> freedom     | 39 <input type="checkbox"/> ludicrous     | 64 <input type="checkbox"/> rambunctious    |
| 15 <input type="checkbox"/> smile       | 40 <input type="checkbox"/> contradictory | 65 <input type="checkbox"/> humongous       |
| 16 <input type="checkbox"/> surprise    |                                           | 66 <input type="checkbox"/> senescence      |
| 17 <input type="checkbox"/> search      | 41 <input type="checkbox"/> affluent      | 67 <input type="checkbox"/> contumely       |
| 18 <input type="checkbox"/> exciting    | 42 <input type="checkbox"/> blatant       | 68 <input type="checkbox"/> spatchcock      |
| 19 <input type="checkbox"/> influence   | 43 <input type="checkbox"/> squander      | 69 <input type="checkbox"/> polyhedron      |
| 20 <input type="checkbox"/> friendship  | 44 <input type="checkbox"/> panache       | 70 <input type="checkbox"/> caterwaul       |
|                                         | 45 <input type="checkbox"/> pervasive     |                                             |
| 21 <input type="checkbox"/> ambition    | 46 <input type="checkbox"/> clandestine   |                                             |
| 22 <input type="checkbox"/> retirement  | 47 <input type="checkbox"/> lackluster    |                                             |
| 23 <input type="checkbox"/> exception   | 48 <input type="checkbox"/> insidious     |                                             |
| 24 <input type="checkbox"/> discount    | 49 <input type="checkbox"/> precocious    |                                             |
| 25 <input type="checkbox"/> distribute  | 50 <input type="checkbox"/> derision      |                                             |

01 ☐ time  
02 ☐ world  
03 ☐ money  
04 ☐ important  
05 ☐ decision  
06 ☐ understand  
07 ☐ explain  
08 ☐ success  
09 ☐ difference  
10 ☐ attempt

11 ☐ immediately  
12 ☐ memory  
13 ☐ beautiful  
14 ☐ freedom  
15 ☐ smile  
16 ☐ surprise  
17 ☐ search  
18 ☐ exciting  
19 ☐ influence  
20 ☐ friendship

21 ☐ ambition  
22 ☐ retirement  
23 ☐ exception  
24 ☒ discount  
25 ☐ distribute

26 ☐ satisfaction  
27 ☒ inherit  
28 ☐ turnover  
29 ☐ precious  
30 ☐ fortunately

31 ☐ imminent  
32 ☒ indigenous  
33 ☐ attain  
34 ☒ reluctantly  
35 ☐ beneficiary  
36 ☐ vacancy  
37 ☐ purchaser  
38 ☒ sibling  
39 ☒ ludicrous  
40 ☐ contradictory

41 ☐ affluent  
42 ☒ blatant  
43 ☒ squander  
44 ☒ panache  
45 ☐ pervasive  
46 ☒ clandestine  
47 ☐ lackluster  
48 ☐ insidious  
49 ☐ precocious  
50 ☐ derision

51 ☐ eavesdrop  
52 ☐ blurb  
53 ☐ voracious  
54 ☐ exorbitant  
55 ☐ lampoon  
56 ☐ gregarious  
57 ☐ assiduous  
58 ☐ moniker  
59 ☐ tetchy  
60 ☐ teetotal

61 ☐ curmudgeon  
62 ☐ malodorous  
63 ☐ plenipotentiary  
64 ☐ rambunctious  
65 ☐ humongous  
66 ☐ senescence  
67 ☐ contumely  
68 ☐ spatchcock  
69 ☐ polyhedron  
70 ☐ caterwaul

01 <input type="checkbox"/> time	26 <input type="checkbox"/> satisfaction	51 <input type="checkbox"/> eavesdrop
02 <input type="checkbox"/> world	27 <input type="checkbox"/> inherit	52 <input type="checkbox"/> blurb
03 <input type="checkbox"/> money	28 <input type="checkbox"/> turnover	53 <input type="checkbox"/> voracious
04 <input type="checkbox"/> important	29 <input type="checkbox"/> files	54 <input type="checkbox"/> deservant
05 <input type="checkbox"/> decision	30 <input type="checkbox"/> fortunately	55 <input type="checkbox"/> lampoon
06 <input type="checkbox"/> understand		56 <input type="checkbox"/> gregarious
07 <input type="checkbox"/> explain	31 <input type="checkbox"/> imminent	57 <input type="checkbox"/> assiduous
08 <input type="checkbox"/> success	32 <input type="checkbox"/> indigenous	58 <input type="checkbox"/> moniker
09 <input type="checkbox"/> difference	33 <input type="checkbox"/> attain	59 <input type="checkbox"/> tetchy
10 <input type="checkbox"/> attempt	34 <input type="checkbox"/> reluctantly	60 <input type="checkbox"/> teetotal
	35 <input type="checkbox"/> beneficiary	
11 <input type="checkbox"/> immediately	36 <input type="checkbox"/> vacancy	61 <input type="checkbox"/> curmudgeon
12 <input type="checkbox"/> memory	37 <input type="checkbox"/> purchaser	62 <input type="checkbox"/> malodorous
13 <input type="checkbox"/> beautiful	38 <input type="checkbox"/> tip	63 <input type="checkbox"/> plenipotentiary
14 <input type="checkbox"/> freedom	39 <input type="checkbox"/> ludicrous	64 <input type="checkbox"/> ambunctious
15 <input type="checkbox"/> smile	40 <input type="checkbox"/> contradictory	65 <input type="checkbox"/> humorous
16 <input type="checkbox"/> surprise		66 <input type="checkbox"/> senescence
17 <input type="checkbox"/> search	41 <input type="checkbox"/> affluent	67 <input type="checkbox"/> contumely
18 <input type="checkbox"/> exciting	42 <input type="checkbox"/> blatant	68 <input type="checkbox"/> spatchcock
19 <input type="checkbox"/> influence	43 <input type="checkbox"/> surrender	69 <input type="checkbox"/> polyhedron
20 <input type="checkbox"/> friendship	44 <input type="checkbox"/> parache	70 <input type="checkbox"/> caterwaul
	45 <input type="checkbox"/> pervasive	
21 <input type="checkbox"/> ambition	46 <input type="checkbox"/> windstorm	
22 <input type="checkbox"/> retirement	47 <input type="checkbox"/> lackluster	
23 <input type="checkbox"/> exception	48 <input type="checkbox"/> insidious	
24 <input type="checkbox"/> discount	49 <input type="checkbox"/> precocious	
25 <input type="checkbox"/> distribute	50 <input type="checkbox"/> derision	

Basic  
A1

Intermediate  
B1

Native  
Speaker  
C1

Lower  
Intermediate  
A2

Upper  
Intermediate  
B2

Linguistic  
Expert

Near  
Native  
Speaker  
C2

- 01 ☐ time
- 02 ☐ world
- 03 ☐ money
- 04 ☐ important
- 05 ☐ possession
- 06 ☐ understand
- 07 ☐ explain
- 08 ☐ success
- 09 ☐ difference
- 10 ☐ attempt

Basic  
A1

- 11 ☐ immediately
- 12 ☐ memory
- 13 ☐ beautiful
- 14 ☐ freedom
- 15 ☐ smile
- 16 ☐ surprise
- 17 ☐ search
- 18 ☐ exciting
- 19 ☐ influence
- 20 ☐ friendship

Lower  
Intermediate  
A2

- 21 ☐ ambition
- 22 ☐ retirement
- 23 ☐ exception
- 24 ☐ discount
- 25 ☐ distribute

Intermediate

- 26 ☐ satisfaction
- 27 ☐ inherit
- 28 ☐ turnover
- 29 ☐ illness
- 30 ☐ fortunately

Intermediate  
B1

- 31 ☐ imminent
- 32 ☐ indigenous
- 33 ☐ attain
- 34 ☐ reluctantly
- 35 ☐ opportunity

Upper  
Intermediate  
B2

- 36 ☐ vacancy
- 37 ☐ purchaser
- 38 ☐ input
- 39 ☐ ludicrous
- 40 ☐ contradictory

- 41 ☐ affluent
- 42 ☐ blatant
- 43 ☐ squander
- 44 ☐ panache
- 45 ☐ provide

OWAD  
WORDS

- 46 ☐ clandestine
- 47 ☐ accolade
- 48 ☐ insidious
- 49 ☐ precocious
- 50 ☐ derision

- 51 ☐ eavesdrop
- 52 ☐ blurb
- 53 ☐ voracious
- 54 ☐ exorbitant
- 55 ☐ introvert
- 56 ☐ gregarious
- 57 ☐ classmate
- 58 ☐ moniker
- 59 ☐ tetchy
- 60 ☐ teetotal

OWAD  
WORDS

- 61 ☐ curmudgeon
- 62 ☐ malodorous
- 63 ☐ plenipotentiary
- 64 ☐ ambunctious
- 65 ☐ humdrum
- 66 ☐ senescence
- 67 ☐ contumely
- 68 ☐ spatchcock
- 69 ☐ polyhedron
- 70 ☐ caterwaul

Linguistic  
Expert

OWAD words  
and phrases are  
selected from the  
English proficiency  
levels of  
near-native (C1)  
and native (C2)  
speakers