

Using the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*

Before beginning this tutorial, you should read the “Quick start” section of the *OED* website (www.oed.com).

NOTE: The *OED* is continually being updated online. Thus, the answers provided here might become outdated (they are correct as of April 2016.)

Sources of Words in English

[Help on Advanced Search](#)

Search in: **Entries** Senses Quotations

Search the text of OED entries: Reset Search

<input type="text" value="Cree"/> in <input type="text" value="- Language"/>	Options for NEAR/NOT NEAR <input type="text" value="One Word"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Ordered
<input type="text" value="And"/> <input type="text" value="Enter search"/> in <input type="text" value="Full Text"/> Remove row	
<input type="checkbox"/> Case-sensitive <input type="checkbox"/> Exact characters	

Subject <input type="text" value="e.g. Genetics, Theatre, Baseball"/> Browse subject »	Date of entry e.g. 1750, 1750-1755, -1500, 1970- <input type="text" value="Enter year or range of years"/> Include entries marked as: <input checked="" type="radio"/> All <input type="radio"/> Current <input type="radio"/> Obsolete
Language of Origin <input type="text" value="e.g. French, Japanese, Bantu"/> Browse origin »	Part of speech <input type="text" value="All"/>
Region <input type="text" value="e.g. Australia, Canada, Ireland"/> Browse region »	Restrict to entry letter or range e.g. m*, dis*, *tical <input type="text" value="Enter range"/>
Usage <input type="text" value="e.g. colloquial and slang, rare, archaic"/> Browse usage »	

Turn on Hit Highlighting in entry content Reset Search

Let's assume you want to search for the words in English that derive from Cree:

1. Click the [Advanced search](#) tab below the Quick search tab.
2. Make sure that the [Entries](#) tab is activated.
3. Fill in the first box with the word [Cree](#) (no quotation marks).
4. From the drop-down menu choose [Etymology](#) and then [-Language](#).
5. Click [Search](#).
6. You will see that there are 48 results, ranging from *Athapascan* to *woodchuck*.
(**Note:** you may increase the number of results that appear on each page by changing the number in the lower left-hand corner to 50.)
7. Now arrange the results in order of the word's appearance in the language by clicking on the [Date](#) in the upper left-hand corner.

Advanced search results

Showing 1-48 of 48 results in 48 entries

View as: [List](#) | [Timeline](#)
Sort by: [Entry](#) | [Frequency](#) | [Date](#)

1. red, adj. and n. (and adv.) View full entry	eOE
...Red Knife Red Knives after Woods Cree miθkōhkomā-n, lit. 'red metal...	
2. strong, adj. View full entry	eOE
...49 or earlier); compare Plains Cree sakāwiyiniwak, lit. 'woodland...	
3. bloody, adj., n., and adv. View full entry	eOE
...ndian Bloody Indians after Woods Cree miθko-iθiniwak, lit. 'blood people'...	
4. blood, n. (and int.) View full entry	eOE
...ody Indian bloody 2a. After Woods Cree miθko-iθiniwak, lit. 'blood people'...	
5. tuckahoe, n. View full entry	1612
...cake of bread, petukqui round, Cree pitikwaw made round. U.S...	
6. Nottoway, adj. and n. View full entry	1650
...s, Menominee na:tawew Iroquois, Cree na:towe:w Iroquois. Now hist...	
7. woodchuck, n. View full entry	1674
...American Indian name: compare Cree wuchak (Watkins), otchock (J...	
8. black-footed, adj. View full entry	1678
... name). In sense 2 after Woods Cree kaskitēwadasit, lit. 'person with...	
9. quickhatch, n. View full entry	1683
...ickehatch A borrowing from East Cree. Etymons: East Cree kwi:hkwa...	
10. sagamité, n. View full entry	1698
...sagamité (Sagard, 1632), repr. Cree Indiankisamitew, hot drink of...	

You will see that the first word specifically borrowed from Cree is *tuckahoe*. The first citation given is 1612. The latest word is *ponaské*, first recorded in 1922.

8. Scroll to the word *toboggan* (#38) and click on it.

toboggan, n. Text size: A A

View as: [Outline](#) | [Full entry](#) Quotations: [Show all](#) | [Hide all](#)

Pronunciation: /təˈbɒɡən/

Forms: Also *tabagane, ta-, tobognay, tarbog(g)in, treboggin, tobogin, tobogen, toboggen* ... [\(Show More\)](#)

Etymology:... [\(Show More\)](#)

1. Originally, a light sledge consisting of a thin strip of wood turned up in front, used by the Canadian Indians for transport over snow; now, a similar vehicle, sometimes with low runners, used in the sport of coasting (esp. down prepared slopes of snow or ice). Thesaurus >
Categories >

1829 G. HEAD *Forest Scenes N. Amer.* 64 After leaving Fredericton there was no town nor village at which the required articles could be procured: namely, a couple of tobogins, a tobogin bag, a canteen..two pairs of snow shoes.

1846 G. WARBURTON *Hochelaga* I. 122 One of the great amusements..is, to climb up to the top of this cone, and slide down again on a tarboggin.

1850 S. D. HUYGHUE in *Bentley's Misc.* 27 152 Snow-shoes, mocassins, and tobaugans, for the use of the men.

1861 J. LEECH *Pict. Life & Char.* 78 (Punch Office publ.) Militaire recalls his Canadian experiences, builds a treboggin.

1863 H. Y. HIND *Explor. Labrador Peninsula* I. 280 The tabognay is a little sledge upon which people in winter amuse themselves in descending hills covered with snow.

1865 P. B. ST. JOHN *Snow Ship* xv. 106 These tarbogins, or tabogins, as they are indifferently called, are small sleighs drawn by hand over the snow.

1874 J. A. SYMONDS *Sketches Italy & Greece* (1898) I. i. 26 The little hand-sledge..which the English have christened by the Canadian term 'toboggan'.

1880 *Daily Tel.* 18 Feb. The 'toboggin' is a wooden car..which is curled up at the lower extremity, or prow, so as to constitute a seat holding a couple of sitters.

1885 *New Bk. Sports* 239 The steersman..gives the tobogan a start, and away they go down the hill.

1891 *Month* 73 24 Travelling with dogs and toboggans during winter. (Hide quotations)

- Note that the first recorded instance of this word is 1829 is a work by G. Head. To get full information on this work, click on the title of the work, *Forest Scenes N. Amer.* A pop-up window provides information on the author and text, including a link to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, if this is available. You may now close that window.
 - Note that the first spelling of the word is *tobogins*.
 - Definition 2b is for the American slang expression *on the toboggan*. This means “a rapid decline.”
 - Definition 3 is for the US use of the word to refer to “a long woolen cap.”
9. Click on the word *woodchuck* (#7). If you press ([Show more](#)) you will get the entire Etymology and learn that the word is likely a “folk etymology” based on the phonological resemblance of the Cree word to the English word *wood*. Also, you will see (in the upper right-hand corner) that this entry has been [updated](#). The OED is in the process of being updated, and not all entries have yet been revised.

Activity: Searching for Words Deriving from Particular Languages

1. Search for the words in English from Swahili.
 - a. How many words are there?
 - b. What is the earliest word from Swahili? When was it recorded?
 - c. What words are in common usage?
 - d. What is the meaning of *safari* in Swahili. When and where was it first recorded?

2. Search for the words in English from Hindi.
 - a. How many entries do you find?
 - b. Organize the entries by date. What are the earliest and most recent borrowings?
 - c. Check the first ten entries. Are these words actually borrowed from Hindi? (Note: you may need to click the [Etymology](#) tab to get the full entry.) What is the earliest word borrowed directly from Hindi?
 - d. During which century were most Hindi words borrowed into English? Can you explain why this would be the case.
 - e. List some common words borrowed from Hindi.
 - f. Check the etymology of the word *curry*. What language does this word derive from? Is it an Indo-European language?

Answers

1.
 - a. Seventy-six entries are listed.
 - b. The earliest word is *pompe*, recorded in 1625. Note that the 1597 entry is not actually a borrowed word (but likely a translation of a Swahili expression).
 - c. The only words that are fairly common are *dengue*, *peri-peri*, *safari*, and (courtesy of Disney) *simba*.
 - d. *Safari* means “journey, expedition.” It was first recorded in 1859.
2.
 - a. Six hundred and fourteen entries are listed
 - b. The earliest in *camphor* (1313) and the most recent is *doorsa* (1999).
 - c. *Camphor*, *galangal* and *rice* are from French; *sandarac*, *malabethrum*, and *sandal* are from Latin. The earliest word borrowed directly from Hindi is *raja*, *rajah* (1555).
 - d. Most Hindi words were borrowed during the nineteenth century, during the British colonization of India.
 - e. Some common words are *verandah*, *shampoo*, *thug*, *dinghy*, *loot*, *sari*, *jungle*, *gunny*, *dungaree*, *chintz*, and food names such as *dal*, *ghee*, *basmati*, and *chutney*.
 - f. The word *curry* is from Tamil, a Dravidian language. It is non-Indo-European.

Sources of Words Attributable to Literary Figures

Let’s assume you want to search for the words in English that were coined by John Milton:

1. Click the [Advanced search](#) tab.
2. Make sure the red [Entries](#) tab is activated. Type [Milton](#) in the first box. Select [Etymology](#) from the drop-down menu in the second box. In doing so, you are searching for “Milton” appearing in the etymologies of words.
3. Press [Search](#).
4. You will be told that there are 91 entries.
5. Arrange the entries by date by clicking on the underlined [Date](#) in the upper right-hand corner. Note that in many cases Milton may be mentioned in the Etymology without the word being attributed to him.

6. Check all entries between 1608 and 1674 (the dates of Milton's life), or perhaps somewhat later since some works may have appeared posthumously. There are 19 possible candidates. A partial list is given below:

59. Grub-street, n. View full entry	1630
...near Moorfields in London (now Milton Street), 'much inhabited by ...	
60. dynast, n. View full entry	1631
...re French dynaste (16th cent.). Milton used the Greek and Latin accusative...	
61. brigade, n. View full entry	1637
... improperly brigado : see -ado. Milton accented 'brigad, which has been...	
62. freak, v. View full entry	1638
... seems to have been formed by Milton .trans. To fleck or streak whimsically...	
63. sensuous, adj. View full entry	1641
...+ -ous. Apparently invented by Milton , to avoid certain associatio...	
64. provender, adj. View full entry	1643
... error for provendered. Compare Milton 's earlier use of over-proven...	
65. barbarize, v. View full entry	1644
...es barbarizing Also barbarise. In Milton 's use (sense 1), Greek βαρβαρ...	
66. Miltonist, n. View full entry	1649
...Milton, -ist. the name of John Milton (see Milton) + -ist. With sense...	
67. sovrán, adj. and n. View full entry	1649
...n. 'sovran sovran. Also 16 soveran. Milton 's spelling of sovereign, after...	
68. seraph, n.¹ View full entry	1667
...herub). (Perhaps first used by Milton .) Compare German seraph, in modern...	
69. joke, v. View full entry	1670
...o jest. Joking is attributed to Milton in Warton's ed. of M.'s Poem...	
70. alloeostropha, n. View full entry	1671
...The form allæostropha used by Milton was retained in later editio...	
71. Miltonian, adj. and n. View full entry	1708
...Milton, -ian. the name of John Milton (see Milton) + -ian. Compare...	

7. The possible coinages by Milton include *freak* (v), *barbarize*, *predict* (v), *attack* (N), *sensuous*, and *seraph* (as a back formation from *seraphim* – see below).

seraph, *n.*

Text size: A AView as: [Outline](#) | [Full entry](#)Quotations: [Show all](#) | [Hide all](#)**Pronunciation:** /ˈsɛrəf/**Etymology:** Back-formation from the plural *SERAPHIM n.*, *SERAPHIN n.* (on the analogy of *cherubim*, *-in* and *cherub*). (Perhaps first used by [Milton](#).)Compare German *seraph*, in modern use perhaps < English, though Luther had in one passage used *seraph* (as a plural). Certain mediæval commentators on Pseudo-Dionysius, followed by many glossaries down to the *Ortus Vocabulorum* (1518), give *seraph* (genitive *seraphis*) as the singular corresponding to the plural *seraphin*; but the form appears to have had no actual currency in medieval Latin.[\(Show Less\)](#)

1.

a. One of the *SERAPHIM n.*[Thesaurus »](#)

- 1667 MILTON *Paradise Lost* III. 667 Brightest Seraph tell In which of all these shining Orbes hath Man His fixed seat.
- 1691 J. NORRIS *Pract. Disc. Divine Subj.* 245 God..who sees Darkness even in the Angels of Light, and charges the loftiest Seraph with Folly!
- 1711 T. KEN *Hymns Evang. in Wks.* (1721) I. 184 The Seraphs who of all love Godhead most Had near the Throne the honourable Post.
- 1786 S. T. COLERIDGE *Genevieve* 4 Sweet your voice, as Seraph's song.
- 1816 BYRON *Stanzas to Augusta* IV, Oh! blest be thine unbroken light, That watch'd me as a seraph's eye.
- 1842 TENNYSON *St. Simeon Stylites in Poems* (new ed.) II. 61 That Pontius and Iscariot by my side Show'd like fair seraphs.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

8. The word *oblivious* is often attributed to Milton. To check whether it is in fact his coinage, type it in the box in the upper right-hand corner entitled [Quick search](#).

oblivious, *adj.*

Text size: A AView as: [Outline](#) | [Full entry](#)Quotations: [Show all](#) | [Hide all](#)**Pronunciation:** Brit. /əˈblɪviəs/, U.S. /əˈblɪviəs/**Forms:** I ME *obliuious*, I ME *obliuoyous*, I ME *oblyvius*, I ME *oblyvuous*, I ME-16 *obliuious* ... [\(Show More\)](#)**Etymology:** < classical Latin *obliviosus* forgetful, producing forgetfulness < *obliviōn-*, *obliviō* *OBLYVION n.* + *-ōsus* *-OUS* suffix. Compare Middle French *oblivieux* that forgets easily (mid 15th cent. as *obliuieux*), causing forgetting or forgetfulness (early 16th cent.; French *oblivieux*). [\(Show Less\)](#)

1.

a. That forgets or is given to forgetting; forgetful. Freq. with *of*. Now rare.[Thesaurus »](#)
[Categories »](#)

- c1450 tr. Boccaccio *De Claris Mulieribus* (1924) 466 (MED), Oblyvuous antiquyte Hir odyr dedys saue thies, that wryten be, Hath worn away without memoryall, As many mo daily it doth and shall.
- c1464 J. CAPRAVE *Abbreviation of Cron.* (Cambr. Gg.4.12) (1983) 49 This emperor Claudius was so obliuious þat, some aftir he had killid his wyf, he asked why sche cam not to soper.
- c1475 *Mankind* (Folg.) (1969) 879 3e were obliuoyous of my doctrine.
- c1487 J. SKELTON tr. Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica* v. 361 Ony reasonable man sholde be remyssyue & oblyuoyous of soo hye kyndenes for hym mynstred.
- c1527 W. PEERIS *Prod.* in *Anglia* (1892) 14 478 He that hath an ere oblyvius, and febill stomake of affexion.
- 1532 R. WHITFORD *Pype or Tonne* f. 226^v, Whan the mynde is obliuious and forgetfull.
- 1581 J. BELL tr. W. Haddon & J. Foxe *Against Jerome Osorius* 430 Gods memory is not so oblivious, that it can so soone forgett this covenant.
- c1612 J. HARRINGTON *Epigrams* (1618) Thinke not, deare Sir, we will be so obliuious.
- 1697 J. LOCKE *2nd Vindic. Reasonableness Christianity* 213 (Seager) What shall we say to such an oblivious author?
- 1725 W. BROOME in Pope et al. tr. Homer *Odyssey* II. vi. 370 All night I slept, oblivious of my pain.
- 1780 E. BURKE *Speech Oeconomical Reformation* 25 The slow formality of an oblivious and drowsy eschequer.
- 1860 J. TYNDALE *Glaciers of Alps* I. xvi. 107 Happily for him, he was soon oblivious of this.
- 1898 E. N. WESTCOTT *David Harum* xviii. 167 He had forgotten to acknowledge the Christmas gift; but, hoping that Mr. Harum had been equally oblivious, promised himself to repair the omission later on.
- 1961 H. C. GRAEF tr. J. von Rintelen *Beyond Existentialism* 172 Heidegger reproaches the earlier philosophers for having discussed only the mere notions of essence and individual ontic being, but, oblivious of being as they were, never being itself.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

Note: the earliest entries are a translation of Boccaccio dated 1450 and a work by Capgrave dated 1464. Thus this word was not coined by Milton.

Activity: Searching for Words Deriving from Particular Writers

1. What two words is Wordsworth said to have introduced into the language?
2. Search for the appearance of Shakespeare in the etymologies of words. You will need to type [Shakespeare](#) and select [Etymology](#) from the drop-down menu, then [OR](#) and [Shakes.](#) and [Etymology](#) in the drop-down menu.
 - a. How many results are listed?
 - b. How can one determine which words are actually attributable to Shakespeare?
 - c. What words still in modern use are attributable to him? Of these, which did he actually coin?
 - d. *Dwindle* is often attributed to Shakespeare. Is it his creation?
 - e. The word *multitudinous* is also frequently said to have been coined by Shakespeare. Was it?

Answers

1. Wordsworth is said to have introduced the words *whirl-blast* and the expression *stuffed owl* referring to bad poetry. In the other cases, Wordsworth is mentioned in the etymology, but the word is not attributed to him.
2.
 - a. Two hundred and thirty-seven entries are listed.
 - b. One can determine the words that are attributable to Shakespeare by organizing the entries by date, then checking for words appearing between 1564 and 1616 (the presumed dates of Shakespeare's life).
 - c. The words *fitful*, *puke*, *perplex*, *eventful*, *beetle*, *gnarled*, *seamy*, *stitchery*, *compunctious*, and *dwindle* are possibly attributable to Shakespeare. He is thought to have coined *stitchery* and *beetle*.
 - d. The verb *dwindle* is described as of dialectal origin, probably from Shakespeare.
 - e. There is no mention of Shakespeare in the etymology for *multitudinous*. The first entry is 1603, Dekker. However, certain uses of the term are probably attributable to Shakespeare (see definitions 2 and 3).

Searching for Phrases and Syntactic Constructions

Let's assume you want to discover the origin of the phrase *shut up* in the sense "be quiet":

1. Look up the verb *shut* by typing it in the [Quick search](#) box. Click on *shut, v.*
2. Use your web browser to find the phrase [shut up](#). This will take you [Phrasal verbs to shut up](#). The first of fourteen meanings of this combination is shown below.

to shut up

1. *trans.* To place or store away in a closed box or other receptacle; to keep from view or use; to confine within bounds. *lit.* and *fig.* †Also to withhold (one's money, kindness, etc.) *from* a person.

[Thesaurus »](#)

- c1400 *Pety Job* 364 in *26 Pol. Poems* 132 Tyll he..wylne to be shut vp in hys cheste.
 1426 LYDGATE tr. G. de Guileville *Pilgrimage Life Man* 17922 To shit vp gold in coffers.
 1526 *Bible* (Tyndale) 1 John iii. 17 Whosoever..seyth his brother in necessitie, and shetteth vppe his compassion from him.
 1530 J. PALSgrave *Lesclarcissement* 704/1 He hath shytte up his treasour in a wall.
 1540 J. PALSgrave in tr. G. Gnapheus *Comedye of Acolastus* l. i. sig. Dij, He neuer perceyued my goodnesse to be shut vp towardes hym.
 1544 P. BETHAM tr. J. di Porcia *Preceptes Warre* l. xciv. sig. E vij, Whose names are worthye to be spred immortal, in euery age, whose fame should not be shutte vp, or hydde in any posteritie.
 1613 G. CHAPMAN *Revenge Bussy d'Ambois* v. sig. K3^v, Our sensiuie spirits..can take..the same formes they had, When they were shut vp in this bodies shade.
 1691 J. SCOUALL tr. D. Beddevole *Ess. Anat.* 120 Each Lobe [of the Liver] is shut up [Fr. *renfermé*] in a very delicate Membrane.
 1742 E. YOUNG *Complaint: Night the Second* ll. 467 Thoughts shut up, want air, And spoil.
 1825 T. HOOK *Sayings & Doings* 2nd Ser. III. 268 Cutting long slips of muslin..and shutting them up in boxes.
 1863 J. D. DANA *Man. Geol.* 27 The waters are shut up within the great basin, the Caspian and Aral being the seas which receive those waters that are not lost in the plains.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

3. Notice that the first use of the phrase is with the literal meaning “to place or store away.” The earliest use of this phrase is from Middle English (1400).
4. Search through the listing for *shut up*. Definition 7, “to conclude, wind up (a subject, discourse, etc.),” has to do with talking, but the † symbol before the definition indicates that this sense is obsolete. Definition 12, “to cause (a person) to stop talking, to reduce to silence,” is the transitive use of the expression. Definition 13, “to shut one’s mouth, to stop talking,” is the intransitive use of the expression. Both uses date from the nineteenth century. (Note that definition 13 is compared to the earlier use cited in definition 10, dating from the seventeenth century.) See below.

10. Of a person: †To end one's course of action (*obs.*); to bring one's remarks to a close. Now *rare*. (Cf. 13.)

[Thesaurus »](#)
[Categories »](#)

- 1626 BP. J. HALL *Contempl.* VIII. O.T. xx. 21 The Joash of Judah..hauing beene preserued..by Iehoiada the Priest..shuts vp in the vnkinde murder of his sonne.
 1657 J. WATTS *Scribe, Pharisee* l. 72 And now (to shut up) I will give you a brief recapitulation.
 1700 R. CROMWELL *Let.* in *Eng. Hist. Rev.* (1898) 13 121, I fear how farre my penn hath runn; it is but reasonable to shut up.
 1868 C. THIRLWALL *Lett.* (1881) II. 175, I must now shut up.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

11. Of a commercial house: To close its doors, stop payment. *rare*.

[Thesaurus »](#)
[Categories »](#)

- 1841 THACKERAY *Great Hoggarty Diamond* x, The very day when the Muff and Tippet Company shut up.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

12. trans. To cause (a person) to stop talking, to reduce to silence. Also to silence (hostile artillery).

Thesaurus »
Categories »

- 1814 J. AUSTEN *Mansfield Park* III. xvi. 305 Her son, who was always guided by the last speaker, by the person who could get hold of and shut him up.
- 1856 DICKENS *Little Dorrit* (1857) I. xiii. 115, I say to them, What else are you made for? It shuts them up. They haven't a word to answer.
- 1860 W. H. RUSSELL *My Diary in India* I. 291 Our artillery seemed to shut the hostile guns up.
- 1861 T. HUGHES *Tom Brown at Oxf.* I. v. 79 When I got there I was quite shut up.
- 1866 *Mysteries of Isis* 7 The Captain shuts up poor Henry..and he can't say a word in return.
- 1887 *Poor Nellie* (1888) 16 Looks at you and shuts you up just like Snorker, my old form master.

(Hide quotations)

13. intr. (colloq. or slang.) To shut one's mouth, to stop talking. (Cf. 10) Often in imperative.

Thesaurus »
Categories »

- 1840 *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans) 10 Oct. 2/4 The Dutch~man got a hint to 'shut up' from one of the officers.
- 1853 'C. BEDE' *Adventures Mr. Verdant Green* viii. 69 Order! or~der! Shut up, Bouncer!
- 1858 TROLLOPE *Dr. Thorne* v, On this occasion he seemed to be at some loss for words: he shut up, as the slang phrase goes.
- 1905 E. GLYN *Vicissitudes Evangeline* 134 He nearly had a fit, and shut up at once.

(Hide quotations)

- Now to find all instances of the expression *shut up* in the OED, go to the [Advanced search](#) screen (click the tab underneath "Quick search" in the upper right-hand corner). Click the [Quotations](#) tab next to the red [Entries](#) tab. Fill the box in with [shut up](#). Change [Full Text](#) to [Quotation Text](#) using the drop-down menu. In the second line, change [And](#) to [OR](#) using the drop-down menu, put [shuts up](#) in the box, and change [Full Text](#) to [Quotation Text](#). Add a third row, repeat the procedure above, but put [shutting up](#) in the box. Click the red [Search](#) tab.
- You will get 432 entries. Organize these by date by clicking the underlined [Date](#) in the upper right corner.

Advanced search results

Showing 1-20 of 489 results in 409 entries

View as: [List](#) | [Timeline](#)

Jump to year (YYYY): [GO](#)

Sort by: [Entry](#) | [Date](#)

- [good, adj., n., adv., and int.](#) [View full entry](#) 1508
...minal Trials Scotl. 1833 I. 58* Of shutting up her gudis..without pindande them...
- [soun, n.²](#) [View full entry](#) 1508
...Criminal Trials Scotl. I. 58* Of shutting up her 'gudis'—viz. sixty-five ...
- [access, n.](#) [View full entry](#) 1576
...375 If the outward wandring be shut up, the inward accesse to God i...

4. chancery, n. View full entry	1600
...xliiii. xvi. 1166 The Censours.. shut up and locked all the offices o...	
5. equity, n. View full entry	1600
... Equity, hee doth..cancel and shut up the Rigour of the generall L...	
6. office, n. View full entry	1600
...xliiii. xvi. 1166 The Censours.. shut up and locked all the offices o...	
7. prothonotary, n. View full entry	1600
...Livy Rom. Hist. xliiii. xvi. 1166 Shut up and locked all the offices o...	

You will find that the earliest entry is 1508. To find the earliest use of the expression in the sense “be quiet,” you would need to read all of the entries and try to determine its meaning.

Searching for the Frequency of “Double Superlatives”

1. Double superlatives consisting of *most* and an adjective inflected with *-est*, such as *most fullest*, are now considered ungrammatical. However, they occur fairly frequently in the history of English. To check for instances of this, go to the [Advanced Search](#) screen and click the [Quotations](#) tab. In the new screen, choose “Quotation Text” from the drop-down menu. Then type *most *est* in the box (no space between *** and *est*).

Advanced search

Help on Advanced Search

Search in: Entries Senses Quotations

Search the text of OED quotations: Reset Search

in Quotation Text

And
↓

in Full Text

Remove row

+ Add row

Case-sensitive
 Exact characters

Date of quotation
e.g. 1750, 1750-1755, -1500, 1970-

All quotations
 First Quotation in Entry
 First Quotation in Entry or Sense

Restrict to entry letter or range
e.g. m*, dis*, *tical

Reset Search

This searches for all instances of *most* followed by *est* in any form (the * denotes any characters—it is a “wild card”).

2. You will find that there are 3900 instances of this construction. Organize chronologically by clicking the underlined [Date](#) in the upper right. The earliest instance is 1380 “most worthiest.”
3. Jump to the year 1900. You will notice that many of the Present-day English entries do not represent double superlatives, but rather positive adjectives ending in *-est*, such as *most* {*modest, honest, earnest, interest*}. This is because double superlatives were proscribed beginning in the eighteenth century and would now be considered non-standard. However, there are some modern examples of double superlatives, including “most unfoolest” (1886) “most greatest” (1877) and “most grandest” (1869).

Activity: Searching for Semantic Changes

1. Do an [Advanced Search](#) for all instances of the word *wry* in quotations of the OED. Organize the examples by date.
 - a. What is the earliest example of *wry*? If you look under the entry *wry*, adj. and adv., what is the earliest example given?
 - b. How many examples do you find? (Note that this number does not include the examples contained under the headword *wry*.)
 - c. *Wry* often occurs as part of a compound. Do a search for compound of *wry* by placing “wry-*” in the Advanced Search (Quotations) box. List the most common compounds. What does *wry* seem to mean in these compounds?
 - d. What does *wry* seem to mean when it occurs with an action noun, such as *wry looks* in the quotation from 1796? Check by clicking on the entry and reading the entire quotation.
 - e. Look at the “Draft Additions 1993” in the entry for *wry*, adj. and adv. Does it seem to mark a change of meaning in this word? If so, what is the change? When does this meaning arise? Can you find it in any earlier quotations?
2. Research the split infinitive
 - a. Students are often told that “split infinitives” (i.e., an adverb interceding between *to* and the verb in an infinitive, as is *to loudly complain*) are grammatically incorrect. To find out how common this is, go to [Advanced Search](#) and select the [Quotations](#) tab. Type *to really* in the box and select [Quotation Text](#) from the drop-down menu. We choose *really* because it is a common adverb. How many entries do you find?
 - b. What is the earliest example? What is the most recent example?
 - c. Would you say that split infinitives with *really* are common? How could you determine this?
3. Find out the earliest use of *hopefully* as a sentence adverb.
 - a. Look at the entry for *hopefully*. Definition 1 list the “manner adverb” meaning “In a hopeful manner.” Definition 2 lists the “sentence adverb” meaning “It is hoped (that).” According to strict prescriptive grammarians, the word *hopefully* is not to be used as a sentence adverb and the OED notes that this usage is “[a]voided by many writers.” What is the date for the first sentence adverb usage?
 - b. Do an [Advanced Search](#) of occurrences of the word *hopefully*. How many examples are there? Give the first example that you find in your search of *hopefully* used as a sentence adverb.

Answers

1.
 - a. The earliest example is 1460 in the Advanced Search (the earlier examples shown, 1390, 1426, 1460 [first example] are not examples of the adjective *wry*). In the entry for *wry*, the earliest example is 1523. This shows you the merit of doing an Advanced Search.
 - b. There are 119 examples.
 - c. Common compounds are *wry-faced*, *wry-mouthed*, *wry-bodied*, *wry-necked*, and *wry-legged*. In these compounds, *wry* seems to mean “crooked, twisted, bent.”
 - d. It seems to mean a look “of displeasure or dislike” (see definition 2b under *wry*).
 - e. The word now has a much more positive (or least neutral) meaning: “Dryly or obliquely humorous; sardonic, ironic.” The first quotation given in the entry is 1923. This positive meaning does not seem to appear in any of the earlier examples found in the Advanced Search.

2.
 - a. There are only 46 results.
 - b. The earliest example is 1809. The most recent example is 2006.
 - c. Given the size of the OED database, 46 examples seems like a small number. But to understand this more precisely, search for instances of *really to*. If you do this, you will find 53 results, dating from 1605 to 2007. That is, it seems that speakers rather equally split or do not split infinitives with *really*. (Of course, it could also be the case that the adverb is placed in a completely different position, as in after the verb, e.g. *to complain loudly*.)

3.
 - a. The earliest example dates from 1932: He would create an expert commission..to consist of ex-Presidents and a selected list of ex-Governors, **hopefully** not including Pa and Ma Ferguson. (1932 *N.Y. Times Book Rev.* 24 Jan. 11/4)
 - b. There are 76 examples. The earliest example of a sentence adverb is likely the example from 1678 (the earlier examples seem to manner adverbs): He may **hopefully** drink Tunbridge waters..if they passe well. (1678 T. Browne *Let.* 1 May (1946) 92) Thus, one can see that it is necessary to do a full search of the quotations to find the earliest instance of a word or phrase.

Another tutorial for the OED can be found at <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~wcd/oedguide.htm>