

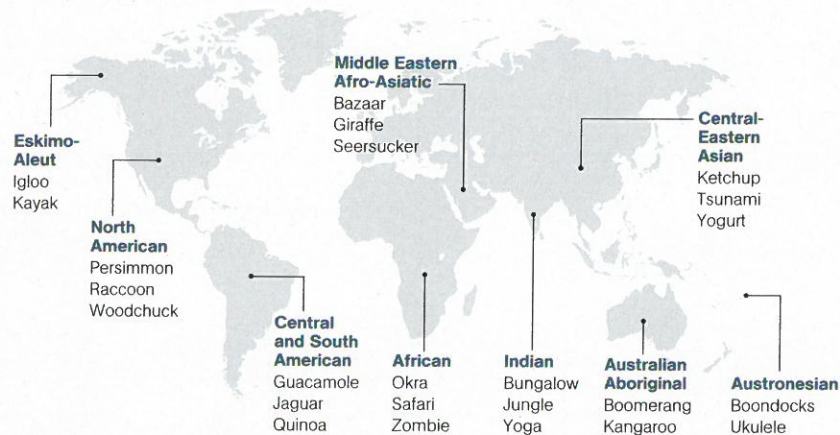
English by the Book

THE WORD "MAGAZINE" offers a lesson in how the English language evolved. The familiar term likely made its written debut in a 1583 letter from a British merchant traveling through the Middle East: "Neither any other Officer shall meddle with the goods, but that it may be kept in a Magosine." There it meant "storehouse," derived from Arabic. The word came to mean a periodical publication—a storehouse of information—in the early 1700s.

The roots of "magazine" were uncovered after the Philological Society of London began to catalog the history of words in 1859. It took 71 years to compile the initial ten-volume work, now known as the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). The current version holds more than 600,000 entries, with new words arriving all the time. —A. R. Williams

WHERE WORDS CAME FROM

The OED traces the origins of words. Many arrived from other European languages or via global exploration.



WHEN WORDS ENTERED THE LANGUAGE

Reviewing more than ten centuries of literature, experts find the first documented use of each word.

PRE-12TH CENTURY

7,492 WORDS

Examples

Believe

Friend

► *Beowulf*, Old English

Laugh

Sorrow

Occurs first in

The OED mainly lists words from A.D. 1150 onward but includes earlier words that survived into that period.

12TH CENTURY

606

Peace

13TH CENTURY

4,953

Cringe

February

Mitten

14TH CENTURY

15,270

Blackbird

Creator

Earthquake

Humanity

► *Wycliffe Bible*, ca 1382

Noun

Substantial

Tetanus

University

15TH CENTURY

18,688

Accomplish

► *Chaucer*

Knight's Tale, ca 1405

Dictionary

Globe

Imaginary

Jet-black

Lovesick

Membrane

Promise

Royal

Tablecloth



and booms in scientific research and publishing contributed to the jump in new words during the 19th century.



► *Dickens*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859

Acid rain

Bicycle

Biosphere

Blueprint

Cello

Dwarf planet

Dyslexia

Feminist

Headphone

Immunize

Lunchbox

Mammal

Mascara

Mesmerize

Mom

Narcissism

Neonatal

Omnivore

Pasta

Photograph

Polarize

Purebred

► *Darwin* letter, 1839

Quartzite

Radicalism

Rain check

Rhinoplasty

Rickshaw

Rigor mortis

Rubber band

Smart aleck

Southerner

Statehood

Subliminal

Subway

Taxonomy

Thingamajig

Urbanization

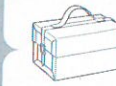
Vegetarian

Vertebrate

Wordsmith

World war

X-ray



The OED is still catching up with words for 20th-century technology and innovation. As a result, the number here is low—but growing.

20TH CENTURY

36,233

AND COUNTING

Acronym

Brainwash

Clone

Database

Gazillionaire

Gorp

► *National Geographic*

May 1972

Icecapade

In-box

Lifestyle

Moped

Multiracial

Neurobiology

Nitpick

Oink

Postmodern

Racist

Recycle

Supernova

Techno

Vegan

Yeehaw



17TH CENTURY

51,076

Aboriginal

Americanize

Black sheep

Caribbean

Civilization

Free market

Geographic

Hand grenade

Hotel

Ice cream

Identify

Islam

Key chain

Ladybug

Magnetism

Mahogany

Mezuzah

Moccasin

► *John Smith*

Map of Virginia, 1612

Naive

Nincompoop

Orangutan

Ostracize

Palatable

Powwow

Prairie

Raspberry

Schoolteacher

Territorial

True blue

Volcano

Womanizer

Overpower

► *Shakespeare*

Richard II, 1597

Potato

Procrastinate

Quinoa

Reality

Redhead

Runaway

Terrify

Timeless

Useful

Ventures abroad helped feed a new appetite for unusual words in the 16th and 17th centuries.

16TH CENTURY

37,047

Blueberry

Communicate

Dictatorship

Easter egg

Education

Heartbroken

Hellenism

Maritime

Mathematics

Mosquito

Nomad

Overpower

► *Chaucer*

Knight's Tale, ca 1405

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Fewer new words were adopted in an era that emphasized precise writing.

18TH CENTURY

24,980

Abolitionist

Bigwig

Capitalize

Dog-eared

Electrician

► *Benjamin Franklin*

letter, 1749

Handyman

Homesick

Millimeter

Neurosis

Optimist

Pervasive

Roommate

Terrorism