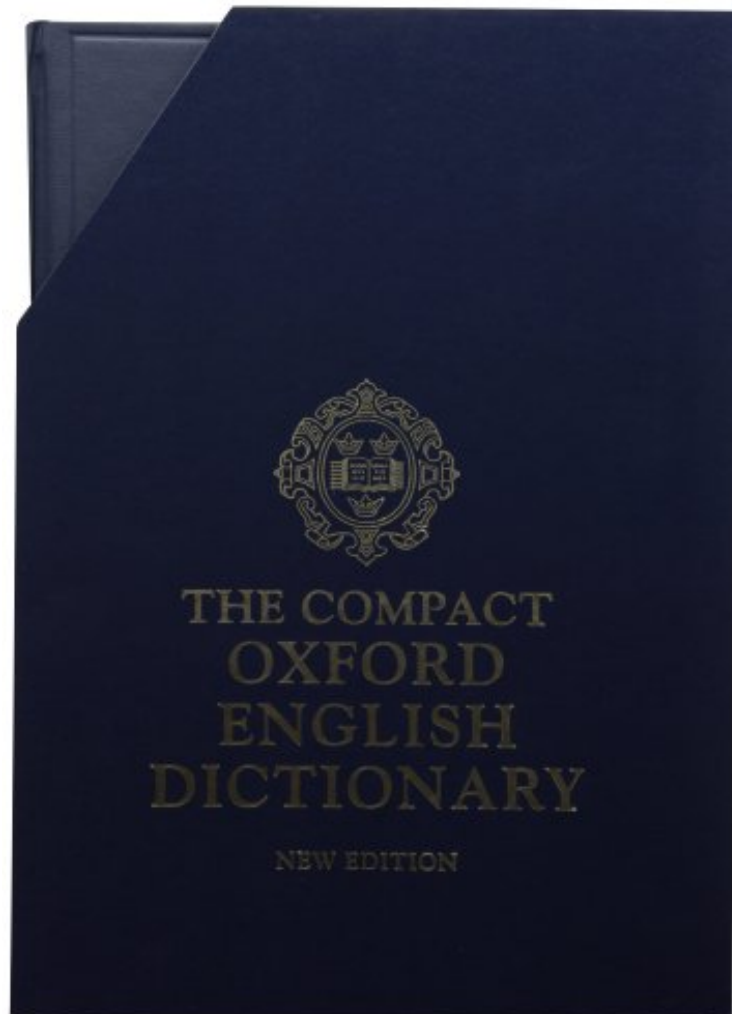


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.com Proper words in their proper places--and a good many improper ones, too! If the OED's many obsolete definitions tend to be the most enjoyable--shuff is dialect for "shy," dolt was once upon a time a verb as well, meaning "to befool"--everyday idiosyncrasies still abound. But, for instance, occupies nine columns of text, and who would wish a single line away? There's also the sublime pleasure of trawling through the sea of relevant quotations. The OED's initial team of "voluntary readers" was asked to cite as many phrases as possible for both archaic and ordinary terms. None seems to have found this remotely arduous, and we now reap the ubiquitous ("present or appearing

everywhere; omnipresent") rewards. This huge venture is a labor of lore, love, and good humor. One caveat: If you skip over the Historical Introduction, you'll miss learning about the Unregistered Words Committee, and overlook the wry warning, "If there is any truth in the old Greek maxim that a large book is a great evil, English dictionaries have been steadily growing worse ever since their inception...." From the reviews of the Second Edition of The Oxford English Dictionary: `The gigantic total picture of the English language...an epic achievement.' Anthony Burgess, Observer`The greatest dictionary in any language.' Geoffrey Wheatcroft, Daily Telegraph`A stupendous achievement.' William Golding, Evening Standard`The greatest reference book ever written.' Stephen Jay Gould, Nature`A national treasure.' New Statesman and Society`Has no real rival in any language.' Godfrey Smith, Sunday Times`One of the wonders of the world...the thing's a triumph.' Richard Boston, Guardian`This is the best.' Philip Howard, The Times`one of the wonders of the modern world ... it is fun to plunge into this colossal book and be ambushed by some unknown word or variation at the turn of every page or, in the case of the Compact edition, of every nine pages. This is a book all literate people will want to give themselves for Christmas, if they cannot persuade anyone else to give it to them. And the OUP should be given the Nobel prize, or something better.' Illustrated London News`virtually impossible to fault ... this is simply the finest dictionary around' Ian Shuttleworth, City Limits

About the AuthorJ. A. Simpson worked on the Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary and prepared the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs. E. S. C. Weiner also served on the editorial staff of the Supplement and compiled the Oxford Guide to English Usage.