

# Re: Merriam-Webster's Unabridged vs Oxford English Dictionary

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  - *Date:* Fri, 23 Jun 2006 19:09:37 +1200
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Peter T. Daniels <[grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote in message  
[news:449AA888.41F4@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:449AA888.41F4@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

Paul J Kriha wrote:

What should I get if English is my second language and I have a passion for knowing it well?

English is also my non-first language.  
My personal impression is that out of those four mentioned by Peter (OED, Chambers, Collins, Macquarie), Collins is (by far) the least often wrong.

What do you mean by "wrong"?

By "the least often wrong" I mean "contains the fewest mistakes". Typically an entry contains information that is internally contradicted by other entries or by entries in several other dictionaries.

For example The Concise Oxford Dictionary (7th edition) which I bought in 1982 has on almost every page at least one misspelled etymology entry. Foreign words are often butchered with letters missing, misplaced diacritics and indifferent typesetting. It makes me not trust any of the etymology entries.

The HarperCollins publication is a completely different kettle of fish.

None of them will be of much use if you're reading contemporary American fiction. You need MW or AHD.

I hardly ever need a dictionary when I read the contemporary

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English or American fiction. My passive vocabulary is okay.

However, when I do need a dictionary, I prefer to use the one that includes all English, American, as well as Australian usages. This is because I frequently move between the main E. language environments.

pjk

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