



## "Household Words"

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## "Household Words"

### Common and Uncommon Words Coined by Shakespeare

POLONIUS: What do you read, my lord?

HAMLET: Words, words, words.

*HAMLET* Act 2, scene 2, 191-192

It's always impossible to know who first coined a word-and not much easier to know who first wrote it down. But here's a partial list of the words for which Shakespeare is the first authority the Oxford English Dictionary could find. Some words predate the first citation in the OED, even in its second edition. In a few cases, Shakespeare was the first to have used the word in at least one of its modern senses; these words are marked with an asterisk (\*). All verbs are in the infinitive form-that is, the "to" form ("to belly," "to overstink," etc.). Where there might otherwise be confusion over the part of speech, I have spelled it out.

A—F | [G—M](#) | [N—R](#) | [S—Z](#)

- abstemious
- Academe
- accessible
- accommodation (a variation of "accommodations")
- addiction (Shakespeare meant "tendency")
- admirable [earlier than OED]
- aerial (Shakespeare meant "of the air")
- airless
- amazement
- anchovy
- arch-villain
- to arouse
- assassination
- auspicious
- bachelorship ("bachelorhood")
- to barber
- barefaced
- baseless
- basta! (first use in English)
- batty (Shakespeare meant "bat-like")
- beachy ("beach-covered")
- to bedabble
- to bedazzle
- bedroom (Shakespeare meant "room in bed")
- to behowl

## Shakespeare Quotes: “Household Words”

- to belly (“to swell”)
- belongings
- to bemad
- to bemonster
- to besmirch
- to bet
- to bethump
- to bewhore
- birthplace
- black-faced
- to blanket
- bloodstained
- bloodsucking
- blusterer
- bodikins (“little bodies”)
- boggler (“slow-poke”; “stickler”)
- bold-faced
- bottled (Shakespeare meant “bottle-shaped”)
- braggartism
- brisky
- broomstaff (“broom-handle”)
- budger (“one who budges”)
- bullyrook (“pal”)
- bum-bailie (term of contempt for a bailiff)
- bump (as a noun)
- buzzer (Shakespeare meant “tattle-tale”)
- to cake
- candle holder
- to canopy
- to castigate
- \* to cater (as “to purvey food”)
- catlike
- to champion
- to channel (Shakespeare meant “to form a channel”)
- characterless
- \* cheap (in the pejorative sense: “flimsy,” “vulgar”)
- cheese-paring
- chimney-top
- choppy (Shakespeare meant “chapped”)
- churchlike
- circumstantial
- clodpoll (“blockhead”)
- cloyment
- clyster pipe (“enema tube”)
- cold-blooded
- coldhearted
- compact (the noun: “agreement”)
- to comply
- to compromise (Shakespeare meant “to agree”)
- consanguineous
- control (the noun)

## Shakespeare Quotes: “Household Words”

- coppernose (“a kind of acne”)
- countless
- courtship
- \* to cow (as “to intimidate”)
- to crank (Shakespeare meant “to reel about”-“to come cranking in” is his coinage)
- critical
- cross-gartered
- cruelhearted
- to cudgel
- Dalmatian [earlier than OED]
- to dapple
- dauntless
- dawn (the noun)
- day’s work
- death’s-head
- defeat (the noun)
- to denote
- depositary (“trustee”)
- to deracinate
- dewdrop
- dexterously (Shakespeare spelled it “dexteriously”)
- to discandy (“melt”)
- disgraceful (Shakespeare meant “unbecoming”)
- to dishearten
- to dislocate
- distasteful (Shakespeare meant “showing disgust”)
- distracted (Shakespeare meant “crazed”)
- distrustful
- dog-weary
- doit (a Dutch coin: “a pittance”) [earlier than OED]
- domineering
- downstairs
- drollery
- droplet
- dry-nurse
- duteous
- to dwindle
- East Indies
- to educate
- to elbow
- embrace (the noun)
- employer
- employment
- to enclog (“to hinder”)
- enfranchisement (Shakespeare didn’t have voting rights in mind)
- engagement [earlier than OED]
- to enmesh
- enrapt
- to ensnare
- to enthrone
- epileptic

## Shakespeare Quotes: “Household Words”

- equivocal
- eventful
- excitement (Shakespeare meant “incitement”)
- expedience
- expertness
- exposure
- exsufflicate (“puffed up”)
- eyeball
- eyebeam
- eyedrop (Shakespeare meant “tear”)
- eyewink
- fair-faced
- fairyland
- fanged
- fantastico (“someone prone to fantasies”)
- fap (“intoxicated”)
- farmhouse
- far-off
- fashionable
- fashionmonger [earlier than OED]
- fathomless (Shakespeare meant “too huge to be encircled by one’s arms”)
- fat-witted
- featureless (Shakespeare meant “ugly”)
- fiendlike
- to film (Shakespeare meant “to film over”)
- to fishify (“turn into a fish”)
- fitful
- fixture (Shakespeare meant “fixing” or “setting firmly in place”)
- flapdragon (a raisin soaked in brandy and set aflame)
- fleer (as a noun: “sneer”)
- fleshment (“the excitement of a first success”)
- flirt-gill (a “floozy”)
- \* flowery (as we use it to mean “full of florid expressions”)
- fly-bitten
- footfall
- foot landraker (“footpad”)
- foppish
- foregone
- fortune-teller
- to forward (“to advance”)
- foster-nurse
- foul-mouthed
- fount
- Franciscan
- freezing (as an adjective)
- fretful
- frugal
- fubbed off (“fobbed off”)
- full-grown [earlier than OED]
- fullhearted
- futurity

## Shakespeare Quotes: "Household Words"

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