Dear bookseller,

Due to new government initiatives, both primary and secondary schools are increasing their focus on spelling, punctuation, and grammar. From May 2013, there will be an English grammar, punctuation and spelling test for year 6 pupils in primary schools, and as of September 2012, student’s GCSE grades in English Literature, History, Geography, and Religious Studies will now partially depend on correct use of punctuation, accurate spelling, and the ability to write grammatically. A dictionary has never been more invaluable to help children with work at school and at home.

The following notes will run you through why a dictionary is needed and provide you with information to pass onto customers to help them choose an appropriate dictionary for their child.

With spellcheckers, why do children still need a dictionary?

- **To get spelling right!**

  A dictionary will help to clear up those spelling issues which will cost children valuable marks. Confusable words, like ‘their’, ‘there’, and ‘they’re’, are highlighted with additional help in children’s dictionaries.

  **complement** noun complements 1 the quantity needed to fill or complete something • The ship had its full complement of sailors. 2 the word or words used after verbs such as be and become to complete the sense. In She was brave and He became king of England, the complements are brave and king of England.

  **irony** (say I-ron-ee) noun ironies 1 saying the opposite of what you mean in order to emphasize it, e.g. saying ‘What a lovely day’ when it is pouring with rain. 2 an oddly contradictory situation • The irony of it is that I tripped while telling someone else to be careful. [from Greek etron = someone who pretends not to know]

- **To understand meaning**

  Oxford’s children’s dictionaries define words using a context that is familiar to and appropriate for each child’s age, with example sentences to illustrate how these words can be used at their best. Where a word has more than one meaning, each one is numbered.

  Dictionaries will help to extend and enrich their vocabulary, which at school can help move them towards the top grades.

- **To understand how language works, including punctuation and grammar**

  Dictionaries help a child to develop children’s writing skills by showing relationships between words, and how you can use grammar and punctuation to greater effect. Extra help is included on how to avoid common mistakes, for example in using an apostrophe correctly.

  **less** adjective & adverb smaller in amount; not so much • Make less noise. It is less important. **USAGE** Do not use less when you mean fewer. You should use fewer when you are talking about a number of individual things, and less when you are talking about a quantity or mass of something. • The less better you make, the fewer pancakes you’ll get.
Why do children need a thesaurus?

A thesaurus will help to improve a child’s writing, whether it is writing reports, essays, or creatively for stories or poetry. They can be a further reference for help on punctuation and grammar, in addition to providing the right word for every occasion. A thesaurus can:

- **find an alternative or more interesting word**, for example why use ‘walk’, when you could use ‘stroll’, ‘ramble’, or ‘saunter’.

- **provide help on particularly overused words**, such as ‘go’, ‘say’, and ‘get’.

- **find the right word, specific person, place or thing**; for example, if you look up ‘shop’, you will find that someone who sells sweets is called a ‘confectioner’.

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Extra help and support

With a pitter-pat-a-pat
And a rattling rat-a-tat
With a splutter and a splatter
With a chatter and a clatter
With a clinking and a clunking
With a plinking and a plunking
With a hee-haw and a boo-hoo
With an oompah and a yoo-hoo
Join in and give a cheer
For onomatopoeia!

Dictionaries and thesauruses can lead you on a journey of language discovery, and it can be fun and entertaining! [www.oxforddictionaries.com/childrens](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/childrens) is jam-packed with word puzzles, games and word trivia. Prepare to be riddled with riddles, tied up in tongue-twisters, and addicted to anagrams.

Oxford Children’s Dictionaries publish dictionaries for age 4 to 16. To find out more about which dictionary to recommend, try our dictionary selectors at www.oxfordchildrens.co.uk. Each dictionary and thesaurus in our range is shown alongside an example inside page, the appropriate age, and extra features available.

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nice ADJECTIVE This word is often overused. Here are some alternatives:
1. We had a nice time in Greece.
   - pleasant, agreeable, enjoyable, marvellous, wonderful, delightful, splendid
2. They are such nice people.
   - pleasant, likeable, agreeable, personable, friendly, congenial, genial
3. That’s rather a nice distinction.
   - fine, subtle, delicate, fastidious