From September 2012, student’s GCSE grades in English Literature, History, Geography, and Religious Studies will depend, in part, on their ability to write grammatically, use punctuation correctly, and spell accurately. With this renewed attention on spelling, punctuation, and grammar, a dictionary is invaluable.

**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 your child valuable marks. Confusable words, like ‘their’, ‘there’, and ‘they’re’, are highlighted with additional help in children’s dictionaries.

- **To understand meaning**
  Oxford’s children’s dictionaries define words using a context that is familiar to and appropriate for your 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 their 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.
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 ‘amazing’, when you could use ‘astonishing’, ‘astounding’, or ‘remarkable’.
- provide help on particularly overused words, such as ‘nice’, ‘big’, and ‘look’.
- find the right word, specific person, place or thing; for example, if you look up ‘collector’, you will find that someone who collects shells is called a ‘conchologist’.

Extra help and support

With a pitter-pat-a-pat
And a rattling rat-a-tat
With a splutter and a splatter
With a chitter and a chatter
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 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 ages 4 to 16. The most appropriate dictionary for starting secondary school is the Oxford English Dictionary for Schools. It has a companion thesaurus, the Oxford English Thesaurus for Schools.
