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Merriam-Webster Dictionary Of Synonyms



Synopsis

Good communication starts with choosing the right word--not always an easy task when the choice is between words of closely related meaning. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms makes the task easier by providing full discussions of synonymous terms and by describing the subtle distinctions that make one word more appropriate than another in a particular context.

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Customer Reviews

This excellent reference book deserves to be much better known than it is. I do a lot of writing in my job, and have used it (or its earlier edition) regularly for about 15 years. I am surprised at how many people do not seem to be familiar with it. There are few truly synonymous words in English; many words mean about the same thing, but have slightly different meanings and connotations, and are more appropriate in different contexts. The purpose of this book is to help you sort all of this out. It is important to understand that this book is NOT a thesaurus, but a completely different, yet equally useful, reference work. A very good essay at the beginning of this book explains this, and gives an interesting history of how books of synonyms developed over the past centuries. The best thesaurus is Roget's International Thesaurus -- the original work, now in its 6th edition, not one of the ones in "dictionary format." Roget's provides long lists words of similar meaning, grouped under conceptual headings. Its purpose is to jog your memory, spur creative thinking, or help you realize what you are really trying to say. It is absolutely the best thing for easing writer's block and helping you to find a word. The purpose of this book, on the other hand, is to help you understand the differences between similar words. It explains nuances of meaning and compares words that mean

approximately, but not quite, the same thing. It has a number of long entries that discuss 5 or 6 similar words together, explaining when to use each and giving examples (usually from good literature) of the correct use of each. When you look up one of the other synonyms, it will point you to the main article in which it is discussed.

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