

**THE AMERICAN WORD BOOK:  
GRADED LESSONS IN SPELLING,  
DEFINING, PUNCTUATION, AND  
DICTATION**

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The American Word Book: Graded Lessons in Spelling, Defining, Punctuation, and Dictation by Calvin Patterson

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BY  
CALVIN PATTERSON



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## PREFACE.

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THE AMERICAN WORD BOOK offers a carefully developed and progressive plan for teaching the forms and values of everyday English words.

Short lessons, judicious grading, the introduction of new terms in connection with those already familiar, the constant appeal to the intelligence as well as to the memory, are the means by which the pupil is trained to use an enlarged vocabulary and encouraged in the exact expression of thought.

Lists of words often mispronounced are provided, together with many comparative exercises, including synonyms, words of opposite meaning, words of several meanings, words spelled alike and pronounced differently, and words pronounced alike and spelled differently. In these, as in all terms defined and in all selections for dictation, the use of diacritical marks is designed to lead naturally to the intelligent use of the dictionary.

Lessons on prefixes and suffixes and easy exercises in word building form an attractive introduction to the subject of etymology, and awaken interest in the structure of our language.

Since one of the more important uses of words is in written discourse, the lessons are so arranged as to coördinate spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Many of the exercises, also, may profitably be made the basis of elementary work in composition; for in constructing illustrative sentences the pupil fixes in mind the form of words, and at the same time acquires a command of language.

Passages from well-known authors have been introduced because they present attractive material for practice and show the value of words as vehicles of thought. These bits of prose and poetry refer not only to childish employments and recreations, but also to many different fields of learning, and cannot fail to stimulate observation and encourage a taste for good reading, while at the same time they lead unconsciously to accurate spelling.



## INTRODUCTION.

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**Orthography** treats of the forms and sounds of letters, and specifically of their proper combination, in accordance with prevailing usage, in the formation of words.

A **letter** is a character or sign used to represent a sound produced by the organs of speech. To write the English language, twenty-six characters are used. These letters, when arranged in their customary order, form the English alphabet, and are adequate to the formation of any word in the language.

Letters are distinguished with reference to their *style* as follows:—

Roman,	<b>Full-face,</b>
<i>Italic,</i>	<b>Antique,</b>
Old English, or Black Letter,	<i>Script,</i>
German Text,	<b>Modern,</b>
<b>Gothic,</b>	<b>Old Style.</b>

Letters are distinguished with reference to their *size* as follows:—

Pica,	Bourgeois,	Nonpareil,
Small Pica,	Brevier,	Agate,
Long Primer,	Minion,	Point,
		Diamond.

Three forms — **CAPITALS**, **SMALL CAPITALS**, and **small letters** — are used with each variety of letters. The small letters are employed for ordinary purposes; the capitals and small capitals for the sake of prominence or distinction.

## THE ALPHABET.

SCRIPT.		ROMAN.		SCRIPT.		ROMAN.	
A	a	A	a	N	n	N	n
B	b	B	b	O	o	O	o
C	c	C	c	P	p	P	p
D	d	D	d	Q	q	Q	q
E	e	E	e	R	r	R	r
F	f	F	f	S	s	S	s
G	g	G	g	T	t	T	t
H	h	H	h	U	u	U	u
I	i	I	i	V	v	V	v
J	j	J	j	W	w	W	w
K	k	K	k	X	x	X	x
L	l	L	l	Y	y	Y	y
M	m	M	m	Z	z	Z	z

## CLASSIFICATION OF LETTERS.

Letters are of two classes, **vowels** and **consonants**, according to the sounds they represent.

A **vowel** is a letter which represents a sound of the human voice but slightly interrupted by the vocal organs. This sound may be either spoken aloud or whispered. The vowels include **a, e, i, o, and u.**

A **consonant** is a letter which represents a sound of the human voice greatly obstructed by the organs of speech. This is implied in the name, which means *sounding with something*, or the union of breath with the action of the vocal organs. Like the vowels, consonants are not restricted by quantity of sound, but can be pronounced in a whisper as well as aloud. They include **b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, x, and z.**

**W** and **y** are sometimes vowels and sometimes consonants. **W** is a vowel when, with a preceding vowel, it represents a vowel sound, as in *awe, newly*. **Y** is a vowel when it occurs either at the end or at the middle of a syllable, as in *boy, eyebrow*. Both **w** and **y** are also called semivowels.

Some of the letters classed as vowels often have a consonantal value; as **i** in *partial*, where *ti* represents the sound of *sh*; and **u** in *quit*, where *u* represents the consonant sound of *w*.

**Diphthongs** are of two kinds, **proper** and **improper**. A **proper diphthong** is the union of two vowels to represent a single sound different from that of either alone; as **ou** in *sound*, **ow** in *towel*, **oi** in *moisture*, and **oy** in *oyster*. An **improper diphthong** is the union of two vowels, only one of which is sounded; as **ai** in *rain*, **oa** in *soap*, and **ea** in *dream, deaf*.