

**What is a dictionary?** A dictionary is a structured reference source that records lexical items and gives information about spelling, pronunciation, word class, grammar, meanings, origin, register, collocations, idioms and typical use. **For terminology work, combine sources: monolingual meaning + authentic examples + specialist terminology databases + your own critical judgement.**

## 1. WHAT TO CHECK IN A DICTIONARY ENTRY

- **Headword and spelling:** BrE/AmE variants, compounds, hyphenation and capitalization.
- **Pronunciation:** IPA, audio, stress, weak forms and regional differences.
- **Word class and grammar:** noun/verb/adjective, countability, transitivity, plural and irregular forms.
- **Sense division:** choose the meaning that fits the context; never translate only the first sense.
- **Register/domain:** formal, informal, literary, legal, medical, technical, slang or offensive.
- **Collocations:** typical partners and patterns: heavy rain, commit a crime, depend on, responsible for.
- **Phraseology:** idioms, phrasal verbs, fixed phrases, prepositions and example sentences.
- **Etymology/history:** useful for advanced semantics, word formation and academic commentary.

## 2. MAIN TYPES OF DICTIONARIES

- **Learner's dictionaries:** clear definitions, examples, CEFR labels and usage notes for non-native users.
- **General/native-speaker dictionaries:** broader coverage, rare words, new words, etymology and fine distinctions.
- **Bilingual dictionaries:** quick orientation; every equivalent must be checked in context and grammar.
- **Thesauri and synonym dictionaries:** helpful for variety, but synonyms differ in register and collocation.
- **Collocation dictionaries:** show natural word partnerships; essential for academic writing and translation.
- **Specialized dictionaries:** law, medicine, business, linguistics, technology or culture-specific terms.
- **Terminology databases:** standardized terms, definitions, domains, source references and reliability labels.
- **Corpora:** not dictionaries, but they show authentic frequency, context, genre and natural use.

## 3. PRACTICAL WORKFLOW FOR ONE TERM

1. Identify field, text type and audience: EU law, academic linguistics, tourism, marketing, etc.
2. Check the English meaning in one learner's dictionary and one general dictionary.
3. Study examples, collocations, prepositions and grammar patterns before translating.
4. For specialized terms, verify the equivalent in IATE, TERMIUM Plus, UNTERM or another field database.
5. Compare at least two sources and note differences in register, region and reliability.
6. Record your final decision in a mini-glossary: term, equivalent, field, context, source and comment.

## 4. USEFUL ABBREVIATIONS IN ENTRIES

- n., v., adj., adv. = noun, verb, adjective, adverb; C/U = countable/uncountable.
- BrE/AmE = British/American English; formal/informal = register; derog. = derogatory.
- sb/sth = somebody/something; esp. = especially; fig. = figurative; lit. = literal.
- trans./intrans. = transitive/intransitive verb; pl. = plural; etym. = etymology.

## 5. EXAMPLE: RECORDING A TERM

- **Term:** stakeholder | Field: EU/public policy | Possible equivalents: zainteresovaná strana, zúčastněný subjekt, partner.
- **Decision rule:** use the equivalent that matches the institution, field and sentence; explain your choice if several are possible.

## 6. ONLINE RESOURCES STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW

- **Oxford Learner's Dictionaries** – best for students: clear definitions, BrE/AmE pronunciation, examples, grammar notes, Oxford 3000/5000 word lists.
- **Cambridge Dictionary** – learner definitions, CEFR labels, pronunciation, grammar help and many bilingual sections.
- **Merriam-Webster** – standard American English: definitions, etymology, usage notes, synonyms, word history and Word of the Day.
- **Collins Dictionary / COBUILD** – British/global English, corpus-based examples, thesaurus, translations and current vocabulary.
- **Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English** – excellent learner dictionary: simple defining vocabulary, frequency, grammar patterns and collocations.
- **Oxford English Dictionary (OED)** – advanced/historical: development of meanings, quotations, etymology and diachronic evidence; often subscription-based.
- **The Britannica Dictionary** – clear American learner's English with simple examples; useful for quick student consultation.
- **Dictionary.com** – quick definitions, thesaurus links and current vocabulary; verify academic decisions elsewhere.
- **OneLook** – metasearch across many dictionaries plus reverse dictionary; useful when you know the meaning but not the word.
- **WordReference** – bilingual dictionaries and forums; useful for translation dilemmas, collocations and phrase-level decisions.
- **IATE** – EU terminology: legal, administrative and institutional terms with domains and reliability indicators.
- **TERMIUM Plus** – Canadian terminology bank; strong for English/French, official equivalents, abbreviations and usage notes.
- **UNTERM** – United Nations terminology for diplomacy, international organizations and official UN usage.
- **ČNK / InterCorp** – Czech National Corpus and parallel data; verify authentic Czech/English patterns and equivalents.
- **SKELL** – quick corpus examples, collocations and word sketches; checks whether a phrase sounds natural.
- **OZDIC** – collocation dictionary; useful for academic combinations such as pose a question or reach a conclusion.
- **Wiktionary** – open multilingual dictionary; useful for quick orientation, but verify with authoritative sources.
- **Macmillan Dictionary** – historically important learner's dictionary; many teachers know it, but do not rely on it as a current online source.

## 7. SPECIALIST DICTIONARIES WORTH KNOWING

- **Law:** Black's Law Dictionary, Oxford Dictionary of Law, legal sections in Merriam-Webster and IATE.
- **Medicine:** Dorland's, Stedman's, Merriam-Webster Medical Dictionary, WHO and EU terminology.
- **Linguistics:** Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar, Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics.
- **Business/economics:** Oxford/Cambridge business dictionaries, Investopedia for orientation, TERMIUM for official terms.
- **Culture and encyclopedic meaning:** Britannica and Oxford Reference; use when a word names a real-world concept.

## 8. COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Do not copy the first equivalent blindly; words are polysemous and context decides.
- Do not treat synonyms as identical; check collocation, register, grammar and connotation.
- Do not mix British and American spelling in one academic text unless the task requires it.
- For technical terms, prefer authoritative databases over random web search or machine translation.
- **Always compare examples:** a correct word may still sound unnatural in a specific sentence.
- **Keep a source trail:** in academic work, you should be able to justify why you chose a term.

**Final checklist:** meaning clear? pronunciation checked? grammar pattern correct? collocation natural? register appropriate? field verified? source recorded? **Meaning + context + field + source = a defensible terminological decision.**

MINI-GLOSSARY TEMPLATE	FIELD / DOMAIN	PREFERRED EQUIVALENT	EVIDENCE + COMMENT
stakeholder	EU / public policy	zainteresovaná strana; zúčastněný subjekt	Check IATE domain and sentence role; avoid a mechanical equivalent.
evidence-based	academic / policy	založený na důkazech / evidence-based	Check collocations and genre; sometimes keep the English term in Czech academic texts.
to comply with	legal / admin	dodržet / být v souladu s	Verb pattern matters: comply with a rule/regulation; verify preposition.
sustainable	environment / business	udržitelný; dlouhodobě udržitelný	Meaning shifts by field: ecology, finance, policy, education.

**Classroom use:** students can compare two dictionaries for the same word, record differences in meaning/register, and justify the best translation for a specific context.