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Laurie E. Rozakis, PhD

Author of The Literate Executive

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Vocabulary For Dummies[®]

**by Laurie E. Rozakis,
PhD**



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Dr. Laurie Rozakis earned her Ph.D. in English and American Literature from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. An Associate Professor of English at the State University of New York College of Technology at Farmingdale, Dr. Rozakis has published more than one hundred books and scores of articles. In addition to *Vocabulary For Dummies*, her publications include trade books, young adult books, textbooks, biographies, reference books, and articles.

Dr. Rozakis frequently appears on television, including the *CBS Morning Show*; the *Maury Povich Show*; Fox *Good Day, New York*; *Metro Relationships*; and Fox *Personal F/X*. Her career and books have been profiled in *The New York Times*, the *New York Daily News*, *Time* magazine, and the *Chicago Tribune*. Dr. Rozakis does a monthly Internet show for yo.com.

Dedication

To Robert from Long Island, my staunchest supporter
and best friend.

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Introduction

What's in this book? Words, words, and more words. Word roots, word suffixes, and word prefixes. And you're reading this book because you have an interest in words — how to use them, how to make the most of them, and how to figure out the meaning of new words.

Whether you're facing standardized tests and want to get your vocabulary up to snuff, or you're wanting to improve your language skills to feel more knowledgeable at work or comfortable in social situations, this is the book for you.

About This Book

In the following chapters, I introduce you to a variety of words. The words are organized in a format that helps you make sense of them. Unlike other books that aim to help you improve your vocabulary, this book isn't filled with list after list of words. Oh, I certainly include lots of tables filled with words, but I organize them by common features — the language that they came from or the root that they share, for example — so that you can remember the terms more easily.

I packed the book so full of fun and fascinating words that I'm hoping you hang on every one of them. But in case you're interested in just a few topics, I set up the

book so that you can dip into the parts or the chapters that interest you and get all the information you need. And I make it easy for you to find what you want: You can check the table of contents or the index to zero in on the specific topic you want. So, whether you're interested in tips on picking up the meaning of an unfamiliar word from the surrounding text or recent additions to the language, you can find the topic and go there.

Conventions Used in This Book

Because it doesn't help if I introduce you to new words but don't tell you how to say them or how to use them, I give you the pronunciation and the part of speech for the words I put in tables. The part of speech lets you know how to use the word in a sentence: You use a noun as the subject of a sentence; a verb relays what the subject does, or what it has done to it. Adjectives and adverbs — abbreviated as *adj* and *adv*, respectively — describe nouns and verbs, respectively. The words I list fall into one of these four categories. Chapter 7 has a sidebar that gives you the rundown on all eight parts of speech that English uses.

I don't offer you pronunciation guidelines for every vocabulary word in this book. Sometimes it would be insulting your intelligence to tell you how to pronounce a word; other times the pronunciation is provided

elsewhere. And, I omitted some pronunciations because I find looking up words fun and fascinating and I want you to experience the joy for yourself. (Check out Chapter 3 for advice on getting the most from dictionaries and other resources.)

Dictionaries use what can seem like a whole new language to tell you how to pronounce words — upside-down *e*'s (called *schwas*), wiggly lines above letters (called *tildes*), and two dots (called an *umlaut*) over other letters can make you feel lost before you get started. Rest assured that I don't use anything except normal letters in the pronunciation guides, which are in parentheses after the word.

I want you to be able to see the pronunciation and say the word. I did my best to be consistent in representing certain sounds — my method is set out in the following tables — but above all, I tried to represent pronunciations as simply and intuitively as I could. Hyphens separate the different sounds of a word, and the sound you stress more than others is *italicized*.

Vowel Sounds

<i>Sound</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Representation</i>
Short a	rat	ah
Long a	rate	ay
ai	rare	ai
Short e	met	eh
Long e	meet	ee
Short i	din	ih
Long i	dine	y
Short o	look	oo
Long o	go	oh
Short u	us	uh
Long u	use	yu



The representations of short vowel sounds appear when the sound is at the end of a syllable; *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u* represent themselves in the middle of a syllable.

A few consonant sounds have their own representations, also. They're in the next table.

Consonants			
<i>Sound</i>	<i>Representation</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
hard c	k	car	kar
soft c and s	s	service	ser-vis
s	z	please	pleez
soft g	j	gentle	jent-ul
qu	kw	quite	kwyt
tion/sion	shun	tension	ten-shun

Notice the slash between *tion* and *sion*. I use a forward slash to separate parts of speech, word elements, and alternative pronunciations; a semicolon separates distinct definitions.



It is a strange but true fact of English (one of many) that how you pronounce a word seems to have little to do with the word's syllables. A *syllable* is simply a part of a word — and though you often pronounce a syllable as one continuous, uninterrupted sound, you don't always do so in the pronunciation guidelines included in this book. This is the long way to say that the divisions in pronunciation guidelines do *not* indicate syllable divisions — you need to consult a dictionary or your spell-check program if you want to know where syllable breaks are.

Special Features

Because I want you to be able to incorporate new words into your existing vocabulary, I put in examples and samples that can help you remember and correctly use new words.

- ✓ The Talkin' the Talk sections are sample, imaginary conversations that usually incorporate words from the tables in the surrounding text, or expand on the new vocabulary by introducing and defining related terms.

- ✓ The Before and After examples point out how you might use new, specific vocabulary in place of old, general terms.

- ✓ Occasionally I give you pointers on how to use new words correctly by giving you examples of Correct and Incorrect usage.

You don't have to make use of these features, but reading through them can help reinforce your newly acquired knowledge.

How This Book Is Organized

I organized 23 chapters into 5 parts. Each part has a theme, which I elaborate on in the following sections. From word basics to word trivia, I cover as much ground as I can, giving you what I believe is the most helpful and useful information.

Part I: Getting Your Bearings

The chapters in this section serve as a map for your voyage to a better vocabulary. I offer a variety of methods that you can adapt to your own preferences and use to increase and improve your vocabulary. I tell you how to discover meaning — at least of new words you encounter, if not the meaning of life — and I give you pointers on choosing words to suit your audience, situation, and style.

Part II: Mastering the Basics

If I tell you that the basic building blocks of words are roots, prefixes, and suffixes — the foundation, beginning, and ending of individual words — and that this part has three chapters, you can probably do the math.

Check out the chapters in this part for comprehensive coverage of essential tools that you can use to decipher unfamiliar words in this book and beyond.

Part III: Expanding Your Base

These chapters take you beyond the basics and give you words that look alike, sound alike, and mean the same thing — or nearly the same thing. Chapter 10 talks about words composed of two or more other words, and Chapters 11 and 12 fill you in on some of the words English adopted from other languages.

Part IV: Getting Savvy with Vocabulary

These chapters help you broaden your knowledge by focusing on specific topics. I give you information on vocabulary in standardized tests, words about money and law, medical terms, and phrases you can use while shopping till you drop. I clue you in on recent additions to the language and how words get added into English. And, if that isn't enough, I also devote a chapter to words that come from the names of real and mythical people and places.

Part V: The Part of Tens

These short and sweet chapters warn you about phrases you shouldn't use, help you distinguish tricky word pairs, and clarify some peculiar English-related problems that may be especially unclear to folks who didn't grow up speaking this rich but often confusing language.

Icons Used in This Book

The little round things in the margins highlight information I think you may find useful or interesting (or both!) on your journey to a better vocabulary.



You may well know some or all of these nifty tidbits, but you can probably impress cocktail-party companions with the facts presented in paragraphs next to this curious fellow.



This icon sits next to text that relates the history of a word or words. The text is sometimes detailed enough to qualify as *etymology* — details of a word's origin.



General concepts to keep in mind, either in your language life or in a particular chapter, are highlighted with this classic reminder symbol.



This little bull's-eye zeroes in on especially practical bits of information that you can use to improve your vocabulary.