

Statement from Oxford University Press – 13 January 2015

“Oxford University Press (OUP) is renowned around the world for its high quality educational and scholarly publishing. Our children’s dictionaries, of which there are 17 in the UK alone, are structured by age, with each dictionary specifically written with a certain age group in mind, and with headwords and levels of definition varying according to what that child will need most at any given age.

“All our dictionaries are designed to reflect language as it is used, rather than seeking to prescribe certain words or word usages. We employ extremely rigorous editorial guidelines and word selections are based on several criteria: the current frequency of words in the daily language of children of that age; children’s culture including their reading of fiction and non-fiction; corpus analysis* and commonly misspelled or misused words. We also take current curriculum requirements into account. These criteria then need to be balanced against the appropriate length of any given dictionary, to create accessible resources appropriate for the age of the child the particular dictionary is aimed at.

“The *Oxford Junior Dictionary*, which was last updated in 2012, is aimed at six to seven-year-olds with 288 pages and approximately 4,700 headwords. As such it is very much an introduction to language. It includes around 400 words related to nature including: badger, bean, bee, berry, branch, caterpillar, daffodil, dragonfly, duck, feather, field, fox, grasshopper, hay, hedge, hedgehog, hibernate, invertebrate, meadow, mouse, nut, oak, owl, pear, plum, robin, seed, shell, sheep, snowflake, squirrel, stag, stone, straw, sunflower, tadpole, vegetation, and wool.

An example entry is:

hibernate verb, **hibernates**, **hibernating**, **hibernated**

When animals hibernate, they spend the winter in a special kind of deep sleep. Bats, tortoises, and hedgehogs all hibernate.

“As children get older they will progress to the *Oxford Primary Dictionary* aimed at eight to eleven-year-olds. This has 608 pages and 12,000 headwords and it contains all of the words that have been recently highlighted and many, many more.”

“We have no firm plans to publish a new edition of the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* at this stage. However, we welcome feedback on all our dictionaries and feed this into the editorial process.”

ENDS

*The Oxford Children’s Corpus is a unique database of over 150 million words used in reading and writing for and by children. Our dictionary team uses the Oxford Children’s Corpus to research how children read and use language and to ensure our dictionaries are age-appropriate and up-to-date as language usage changes. It also helps us identify new or re-emerging word trends, words they find tricky to spell, and common issues with grammar and punctuation.