

NWL2023 Draft Report

Revised 2023-10-05

The NASPA Dictionary Committee (DC) has completed work on the beta draft of the NASPA Word List 2023 Edition (NWL2023), and recommends its adoption as presented below.

Timeline

- 2020-10-18: DC meets online after NASPA Word List 2020 Edition (NWL2020) promulgation to discuss resuming regular editorial work on next projects, including:
 - next edition code-named NWL202x, including 11-letter words from the Canadian Oxford Dictionary 2nd Edition (COD2), any corrections identified in the interim, assessment of member suggestions;
 - updating the online list of offensive slurs as needed;
 - adding and editing definitions for NWL entries.
- 2022-08-25: NASPA News announces Official Scrabble Players Dictionary 7th Edition (OSPD7) being on the horizon and solicits new Dictionary Committee volunteers.
- 2022-09-30 (approx.): Merriam-Webster (MW) publishes first printing of OSPD7.
- 2022-11-21: DC circulates task list for NWL202x as NWL2023.
- 2023-05-13: DC completes first draft of spreadsheet of NWL2023 additions for alpha-testing.
- 2023-07-09: Last day for new words to be scanned from MW's Online Word List (MW-OWL).
- 2023-09-24: DC agrees to a provisional new word list.
- 2023-09-28: This document is published, along with the provisional new word list.
- 2023-10-12: Deadline for submitting any feedback to info@scrabbleplayers.org.
- 2023-10-26: Planned publication date of final DC report on NWL2023, along with final new word list.
- 2023-10-26: Publication of draft NSWL2023.
- 2023-11-21: NASPA Advisory Board to determine effective date of NWL2023.
- 2023-11-09: Publication of final NSWL2023.
- 2024-01-19: Projected date of printing for NWL2023 and NSWL2023.

Discussion

NWL2023 includes not only the latest words from OSPD7 and MW-OWL (through 2023-07-09) but also the completion of the COD2 dataset through 15 letters, some standardization of plurals, and a number of additions and corrections requested by members. Policies for word selection remain essentially unchanged from NWL2020, except for some relaxation as to slur status, with details described below.

As usual and in conjunction with the Publication Committee, the Dictionary Committee will update the NASPA Word Database to show which words have been reviewed in the current process, and how the Dictionary Committee reached its decisions about categorizing, including some candidates for potentially inferable inflections that were judged insufficient for inclusion as collegiate-level words (thus nonwords for NASPA purposes).

We are thankful for reports from many interested correspondents, including Steven Alexander, Tim Bottorff, Emma Ferrett, Adam Henderson, Deborah Komatsu, Chris Lipe, Dan Pratt, and John Wilder, which were considered during word list production.

As scheduled, the DC continued to consider the question of the two slur standards it had previously suggested, a stronger criterion (at least often offensive and personally applicable in not just one but all senses) and a minimal criterion (at least sometimes offensive in at least one dictionary and personally applicable in at least one sense, but possibly not offensive and personally applicable in all senses). In consultation with the Executive Committee, at this time the DC has agreed to recommend the stronger standard for definition of offensive slur. Therefore, in harmony with its directive to keep brand reputation under review in light of the lexical climate, 112 “disputed slurs” are being reclaimed and included in NWL2023. This list is quite similar to the 104 words with asterisks that did not meet the stronger standard in 2020, with some adjustments for usage changes through 2023; these words are included because they have inoffensive usages in proper contexts (as “bogtrotter”, a traveler; or “coloreds”, laundry articles), or because their main usages are frequently inoffensive (as “nonhandicapped”, not directed for the use of disabled persons; or “redneck”, a white laborer). The rule of inheriting status from a root continued to be used during this process to keep related words together. To the remaining list of 147 undisputed slurs were added 5 terms from NWL2020 that have gained slur status in the interim due to lexicographical changes, and 16 new terms that qualify as offensive slurs from their inception, yielding 168 total terms.

NSWL2023 will, as usual, contain all words found in NWL2023 except those judged often offensive by any single authority. Because OSPD7 used a different criterion for inclusion and definition than OSPD6, the committee’s prior rules for school lists require amendment, which will be developed in more detail in the final draft. Aside from new words unsuitable for school, the deletions are anticipated to be minimal.

Criteria for New Words

New words were found by the following methods:

- Search through MW’s SCRABBLE Word Finder (SWF) for new words (yielding a list identical to new OSPD7 words). The form “convasse”* was judged to be an erratum for “concasse”.
- Sufficiently assiduous search through MW for new words, including additional inflections, related terms, and run-ons for SWF words.
- Physical search through COD2 for words with roots of 11–15 letters, including inferred inflections where not explicitly given.
- Review of disputed slurs for reclamation as described above.
- Review of special classes of existing entries for overlooked inflections and run-ons (such as identity plurals and others elaborated below).
- Words implied by an explicit “etc.” (e.g. “sulf-” vs. “sulph-”) or cutback form (e.g. “-ise”) in COD2 and OCD2 indicating a class of variants.
- Geologic eras from WNW4 not included in Tournament Word List 2014 (TWL2014).
- Recommendations from members consistent with inclusion criteria.

Special focus was directed at many entries requiring inflection inferences (plurals and some comparisons). A general statement agreeing with the extensive history of inclusivism toward plurals by the committee and its predecessors appears in Merriam-Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (1976): “Regularity is so dominant that in theory all English nouns may be said to be capable of an analogical plural in the letters -s or

-es, and in practice little hesitation in so forming a new or unknown plural should be felt.” Every OSPD preface, in speaking of exhaustive inflection, has recognized the word researcher’s tendency to infer plurals freely when the matter is left to implication. Yet this inclusion is not universal; for instance, WNW2 (1980), listing its principles at the entry for the word “plural”, lists “Nouns ending in -ics” among “forms singular or plural only,” relieving one of the burden of inquiry for uninflected “-ics” nouns where a thoughtless application of the standard “-es” plural (“-ices”) would override common sense. The committee developed an initial ruleset, described herein, for more consistently navigating uninflected entries in the future, and resolved many of the most ambiguous omitted inflections by explicit acceptance, or deprecation, of invited inferences.

Though comparatives and superlatives of adjectives were added freely to words in the classes surveyed, the committee agreed that a general review of addible comparatives and superlatives should await a later update as a new agenda. We also agreed that a later update should reflect a more thorough reasonableness test of all plurality relationships in the word list to uncover remaining errors or omissions. Because of NASPA’s commitments to publish definitions for projects like *Zyzyva*, this inflection project may extend to supplying usage labels for some of our definitions indicating different levels of usage.

The draft list of additions appears as a separate Member Services document. Members are invited to comment at dictionary@scrabbleplayers.org through 2023-10-12, after which the list will be finalized.

Plurals Research (“Leftmost”)

(Asterisks indicate lowercase forms not recommended for NWL2023.)

For some time the committee’s agenda have formally included consideration of the deletion of “leftmosts”*, a task description standing in for a broad review of inferred inflections for deletions and additions. Several classes of words were prioritized for consistency review: words with conflicting data cross-references (which included “leftmosts”*), identity plurals, words ending with vowel plus “-s” (with focus on “-itis”), words ending with “-wear”, TWL2014 additions not adopted by SWF, and words with a history of divided opinion. For the vast majority, the entries were validated as is, with many new database notes being drafted; a few deletions were recommended, reported below; and a number of new inflections were proposed, discussed, and recommended. To judge among potential inferences, the committee drafted a ruleset encompassing inference principles that reflect its history of decision-making for nouns without explicit plurals, including the following:

- Explicit form: Any explicit entry or inflection in a primary or un-rebutted secondary authority is taken as an undisputed word and supplements other testimonies, with the sole exception of clearly demonstrated error (“convasse”* in OSPD7, “sfoxier”* in OSPD3). This includes the indices of merriam-webster.com or ahdictionary.com, visible by typing the form in the dropdown searches, and reflected in redirect links; “pirogis” and “muskellunges” are thus new forms present in the MW-OWL index. (This credit does not extend to dictionary.com, not controlled by RH, where the index contains such envelope-pushing as “economicises”* and “elevenseses”*.)
- Standard plural: The overwhelming default is that a noun is pluralized with “-s” or “-es” within ordinary English orthography rules (sibilants take “-es”, “-y” becomes “-i-”, “-o” after a vowel takes “-s” and after a consonant depends on language of origin, etc.). “Gases” is a valid standard plural; “gasses” is a valid but nonstandard plural.
- Foreign standard plural: A word of foreign origin can also take a standard plural from its origin language if supported by sufficient explicit examples. For the new word “contrapposto”, the plurals “contrappostos” and “contrapposti” can be inferred.

- Cutback plural: Nouns can inherit status from their final terms given by the same authority (see exception in next rule); some nouns can be cut back repeatedly. Uninflected entries ending in “-(wo)man” with related definition take only the plural ending in “-(wo)men”.
- Cutback “-itis”: MW’s entry for “-itis”, listing the plurals “-ites”, “-itides”, and “-itises”, was recognized (at about the time of the Long List) as not intended to be expansive or to support three plurals for every noun ending in “-itis”; rather, it is illustrative, and these entries are to be considered individually. “Senioritis” pluralizes only in “-itises”, despite the note “plural usually -itises” at “-itis” that might be used to infer other plurals.
- Plural form or verb: An entry labeled with the equivalent of “plural noun” (form), “singular in construction” (verb), or “plural in construction” (verb) is not to be pluralized. (This does not extend to rare in-line labels like “plural” or “treated as” to emphasize plurality in meaning rather than form or construction, nor to OSPD’s different use of “n/pl”.) “Analecta” is a plural noun in all sources and does not take an “-s”.
- Singular etymology: An entry unlabeled as “plural noun” but that “looks” plural may still be pluralized if the etymology is not explicitly plural. “Laches” comes from the obsolete “lachesse”* (similar to “largesse”), possibly influenced by “-es”; so it is singular in etymology and takes the plural “lacheses” (which has been questioned but is occasionally used in legal reporting).
- Plural etymology (RH): Random House often eschews a “plural noun” label or any other contraindication when the plurality is explicit in the etymology: so we determined that an entry in RH with plural etymology is insufficient to allow a pluralization inference. The proposed form “earningses”* was unsupported due to RH plural etymology. We were undecided whether RH etymology that might support extant usage of the rare computing term “flopses”* should be categorized as singular or plural (see collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/flops), so we did not add it and instead included it among open questions yet to be resolved.
- Plural etymology (other): While a plural etymology in another source’s uninflected entry does not bar pluralization, it is a warning sign that one should be cautious. Plural etymologies of foreign origin generally may be pluralized further in English, such as in dishes (“zitis”) and other assemblages. We added only two plurals of English-origin words of singular definition and plural etymology: “newses”, meaning notable events (compare “mewses”), and “crossboneses”, meaning symbols composed of crossed bones (compare “sawboneses”).
- Suffixal identity: Nouns ending in “-ics” and “-ies” (English or Latin derivation) are recognized as the equivalent of identity plurals, and are not to be pluralized further unless explicitly excepted; “rabieses”* was previously rejected as erroneous. The plural of “manyplies”, a ruminant stomach, was found explicitly in the AH5 index to be “manyplieses”, newly admitted as an exception to practice.
- Synecdoche as identity: Some dozens of nouns of plural etymology serve as synecdoche (“slyboots”, part for whole; “tinsnips”, species for genus). A number of games were also included (“loggets”). To prevent the inference that these terms should all take “-es”, we judged that synecdoche was a sufficient contraindication of implicit pluralization. Inclusion of “numbnutses”*, an implicit inference, was thus ruled a judgment error; “sawbones”, from Dickens, remains about the only pluralized synecdoche explicitly accepted by authorities.
- Authority carryover: Silence in a primary authority (typically MW or RH) can be resolved by a secondary authority from the same publisher (OSPD or an unabridged). The noun “gents” for a men’s room has no explicit plural in MW-OWL, but OSPD being from the same publisher can be taken as indicating “gents” is an identity plural and thus extant usage of “gentses”* is not sufficient.

These principles guided selection of additions and deletions for the plural review project. The NASPA word database will be updated to reflect judgments made about individual words and about forms not accepted as collegiate-level words, including a number of cases where the committee upheld status quo but remains open to making a later judgment based on further historical research arising. Comments and citations are particularly solicited from the membership on the subject of inconsistencies in inferred inflections, and are welcome at any time.

Deletions

We recommend 38 deletions as slurs or errors.

- The following 5 words met criteria for slur status in 2020 except for their presence in OSPD6 and SWF, and have now been deleted in OSPD7 and SWF so are being considered new slurs (*): mongol, mongols, negroid, negroids, nellie.
- The following 10 words were requested for review by WESPA and the Dictionary Committee has determined that they were included in error in TWL2014 (*):
 - coadys (“coady” in nonspecialist use takes only the plural “coadies”)
 - floreats, floreating (“floreat” is an uninflected verb; “floreated” remains an alternate spelling of “floriated”)
 - floruit, floruiting (“floruit” is a noun)
 - lookited, lookiting, lookits (“lookit” is an interjection)
 - luvd, luving (“luv” is inflected with double v, which is standard for verbs)
- The word “godamndest”* was previously judged a typo for “goddamndest”, arising from a misread cutback in RH, but it was not deleted at the time of discovery.
- In the previously scheduled review of suspicious plurals, the following words were determined not to be supported by any references (*):
 - leftmosts (“leftmost” is an adjective, “leftmosts”* was mistakenly inferred from MW’s noun tag on “left”)
 - numbnutses (“numbnuts” via synecdoche serves as identity plural, “numbnutses”* was inconsistent with practice though otherwise standard)
 - palpuses (“palpi” is the plural in all sources, “palpuses”* was mistakenly inferred from COD2’s unusual placement)
 - rhinoceroi (“rhinoceroes” is the newly added correct Greek plural, “rhinoceroi”* was erroneously added to Wiktionary in 2006 and subsequently added to dictionary.com)
 - staphylinidae (“staphylinids” is the plural, “Staphylinidae” is a genus)
- “Grizes”* and “sheeples”* were present in OSPD6 and deleted in OSPD7; the committee judged that MW was admitting these to be erroneous forms (both singulars take an identity plural) and followed suit.
- The following 15 words were incorrectly inferred from COD2 by applying variant spellings in cases other than inflections (*): glamorless, outharbor, outharbors, podsolise, podsolised, podsolises, podsolising, podsolize, podsolized, podsolizes, podsolizing, swoppable, syphonage, syphonages, vapourous.

Authorities

For this project, the committee referred primarily to the original source lexica used to construct NWL2020 and its predecessors, and secondarily to available later editions and online versions. Primary authorities determine whether or not a root word is valid; secondary authorities may overrule primary authorities in determining additional information about the word, such as inflections and usage. Authorities were consistent with those used for NWL2020, with minor adjustment, such as admission of OSPD for limited purposes of reflection upon MW-OWL.

- AH: American Heritage College Dictionary
 - Primary: 1st through 4th editions
 - Secondary: 5th Edition (unabridged) and online version at ahdictionary.com/word/search.html and yourdictionary.com
- COD: Canadian Oxford Dictionary
 - Primary: 2nd Edition (COD2)
- FW: Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary
 - Primary: 1973 and 1974 editions
 - Secondary: funkandwagnalls.com
- MW: Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary and its digital successor Merriam-Webster's Online Word List (MW-OWL) (Merriam-Webster's internal name for the word list on their website, which has replaced their print edition, and which we take to exclude entries labeled exclusively as medical, legal, or unabridged content)
 - Primary: 8th through 11th editions, merriam-webster.com dictionary tab, excluding entries marked with specific sources beyond the Collegiate section
 - Secondary: OSPD: Official Scrabble Players Dictionary, 1st through 7th editions (OSPD1–OSPD7)
 - Secondary: Merriam-Webster SCRABBLE Word Finder (SWF), scrabble.merriam.com
- OCD: Oxford College Dictionary
 - Primary: 2nd Edition (OCD2)
- RH: Random House Webster's College Dictionary
 - Primary: 1st and 2nd editions
 - Secondary: Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, and online version at collinsdictionary.com, dictionary.com, and infoplease.com/dictionary
- WNW: Webster's New World College Dictionary
 - Primary: 2nd, 3rd, and 4th editions (WNW2–WNW4)
 - Secondary: 5th Edition and online version at collinsdictionary.com and yourdictionary.com

Abbreviations

- DC: NASPA Dictionary Committee
- NSWL: NASPA School Word List
- NSWL2023: NASPA School Word List 2023 Edition
- NWL: NASPA Word List
- NWL2020: NASPA Word List 2020 Edition
- NWL2023: NASPA Word List 2023 Edition
- TWL2014: Tournament Word List 2014 Edition