H-Net Reviews
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The American Heritage Talking Dictionary. Houghton Mifflin Company.

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The CD-ROM comes bundled with a regular desktop printed dictionary. One is almost awestruck when contemplating the fact that this "bulky" dictionary has been condensed into this thin disk, with many attractive additions that one cannot possibly hope to have for the "bulky" version. The only things you find in the desktop version that you don't find in the CD-ROM are the graphics and illustrations. While these certainly are desiderata, it is the current reviewer's understanding that the CD-ROM technology still does not allow a small CD-ROM to store so many graphics, pictures, and illustrations that the desktop dictionary does. So we have to live with this fact. <p> Of course every dictionary "leaks," so if you do not find phrases like "au contraire" or "c'est la vie" in the electronic version (or, for that matter, in the printed version), do not grumble: that's life. <p> What you can do with the electronic version is impressive. <p> 1. <cite>Look up words</cite>. There is no flipping the pages! Just enter the word and press "Return." It's really fast! If a definition contains a word you don't know, double-click it to see its definition. Besides regular word entries, the Dictionary contains entries such as: abbreviations, biographical entries, geographical entries, Indo-European roots, Universities and Colleges. Many entries furthermore include etymologies, usage notes, regional notes, word history, and antonyms. <p> 2. <cite>See a list of synonyms</cite>. Always handy when you need another word of similar meaning. <p> 3. <cite>Find the right spelling</cite>. When you are not sure of a spelling, you can just enter something similar, and the Dictionary will get you a list of suggested alternate words. <p> 4. <cite>Find the right word</cite>. This is a great feature. Select the "WordHunter" button and try entering "bird AND primitive"; you will see "archaeopteryx" in the Results window, the word you wanted! That is, you can find the word you want by entering semantic cues. <p> 5. <cite>Use wild-card characters</cite>. You can use wild-card characters to find words that start with or end with certain letters, or contain letters in a certain order. Want to know -ism words? It's very simple. Just enter "*ism" and the Dictionary will get you a whole list of -ism words. Or want to find a six-letter word that begins with "si" and ends with "le"? Again it's very simple. Just enter "si? ? le" and the Dictionary will get you words like sickle, simile, simple, etc. <p> 6. <cite>Listen to the pronunciation of many of the words</cite>. Whenever the option is available, you can press the Pronounce button and hear the word pronounced. If you so wish, you can have words pronounced automatically whenever you look them up, and repeated between one and three times. <p> 7. <cite>Find anagrams</cite>. Enter a word to find all the words that can be made from the one you entered–ideal for a variety of word games. <p> 8. <cite>Look up the word again</cite>. <cite>The American Heritage Talking Dictionary</cite> always provides you with a history of the sixteen most recent words you have looked up. Selecting any one of them will immediately get you the word entry of your selection. <p> 9. <cite>Change the font size</cite>. If you find the Dictionary font size too small or too large, you can change it to the size of your choice. The font sizes available are 9, 10, 12, 14, and 18. <p> 10. <cite>Copy and paste the Dictionary entries</cite>. The information you retrieve by using the Dictionary can be copied and pasted onto any document, certainly a great feature for students and teachers at various levels. <p> There are many more helpful extra features (such as using the Dictionary by double-clicking the word in your favorite word processor document), but for these and other nice details the reader is referred to the actual on-line Dictionary manual. <p>

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