

LDOCE: A comparison of the 1978 edition and the 1987 edition :

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1. 1978 (front cover flap): over 55,000 entries

1987 (page F8: General Introduction): around 56,000 words and phrases

Contents pages give:

1978 : 1280 pages of dictionary text

1987 : 1229 " "

A comparison of three randomly selected folios of the 1987 edition and the equivalent pages of the 1978 edition, listing items in BOLD FACE in one that are not covered in any way in the other (see below for more detailed notes).

35 items in the 1978 edition have been omitted from the 1987 edition, and 31 items in the 1987 edition were not in the 1978 edition. So the figures 55,000 and 56,000 are probably fair in that they suggest that the number of items in the two editions are roughly the same.

1978 (pp 297-300; approx 4 cols 1987 (pp 278-9; 4 cols)
 + 20 lines) `desperate' to `developing country'

---- destabilize, also -ise; -ization
desuetude ----
detachedly ----
detect detect; -able
detour(2,vb) ----
the deuce to pay ----
the deuce you will/won't, ----
he can/can't, etc
Deuce take it ----
Deuteronomy ----
---- Deutschmark, also Deutsche Mark

1978 (pp 812-4; approx 4 cols 1987 (pp 769-770; 4 cols)
 + 64 lines) `petrochemical' to `phonetic'

---- petrodollar
petticoat government ----
peyote ----
---- PG
---- pH
phalarope ----
---- phantasm
phantasmic ----
---- phantom pregnancy
---- phase he's going through
---- phased withdrawal
phenol ----
phi ----
---- Phi Beta Kappa

philander	----
-phile	----
philhellene, -lenic	----
-philia	----
-philiac	----
Philistine	----
phlebotomy	----
-phobe	----
-phobia	----
-phobic, -phobically	----
Phoenician	----
----	like a phoenix from the ashes
phon-, also phono-	----
----	on the phone
----	phone book, also telephone directory
----	phone box, also call box, phone
----	booth, telephone box, telephone booth
----	phone-tapping

1978 (pp 1137-9; approx 4 cols	1987 (pp 1085-6; 4 cols)
- 14 lines)	`taxi' to `technique'

----	taxing
----	taxman
----	taxpayer
----	tax shelter
----	not for all the tea in China
teach	teach; ~able
----	teach one's grandmother to suck eggs
----	teach someone a lesson
teaching machine	----
teacupful	----
teakettle	----
----	team effort
team spirit	----
----	shed any tears
----	reduced...to tears
----	tear someone limb from limb
----	tear something to shreds
----	That's torn it!
tear at	----
tearless	----
----	tease out
tea strainer	----
tea table	----
teatime	----
tea tray	----
techn-, also techno-	----
----	Technicolor

2. The changes in the headword list seem to reflect some policy decisions:

- a) fewer affixes in the headword list (e.g. -phile, -philia, -philiac, -phobe, phon-, techn-, etc are omitted in 1987): NB Appendix 4 of 1987, on Word Formation, gives a substantial list of affixes, with full definitions and exemplification, so they have not been removed altogether.
- b) fewer encyclopedic entries (e.g. Deuteronomy, phi, Philistine, Phoenician are omitted in 1987)
- c) fewer rare words and phrases (e.g. desuetude, phrases with `deuce', phalarope, philhellene, phlebotomy are omitted in 1987)
- d) more phrases and collocations at the commoner words (e.g. a phase he's going through, phased withdrawal, on the phone, teach someone a lesson, burst into tears, shed any tears, reduced...to tears, That's torn it, etc are included in 1987)

3. The numerical comparison is complicated by

- a) the change from listing phrasal verbs as headwords in the main alpha order in 1978 to adding them in secondary alpha order under verbs in 1987.
- b) the juggling about with typefaces between the two editions:
 - e.g. `phallic symbol' is in bold in 1978, in italic in 1987.
 - `burst into tears' is in italic in 1978, in bold in 1987.
 - `tearing hurry' is in italic in 1978, in bold in 1987.
- c) the 1987 seems to make greater use of `also...' followed by an alternative word or phrase in bold type after a headword:
 - e.g. `petticoat, also slip', `phone box, also call box, phone booth, telephone box, telephone booth', `tea caddy, also caddy', `dessert, also sweet, pudding', `Deutschmark, also Deutsche Mark'.

4. I cannot find any explicit references in the front matter of either edition to the number of senses, but a comparison of the two editions shows the following:

- a) `desperate' to `developing country': numbered/lettered senses

	1978	1987	
desperate	3	4	[cat 1 of 1978 split to highlight `+ for/to-inf']
desperation	2	1	[cat 2 of 1978, (infml, `drive SB to d.') omitted]
destined	1	2	[new cat `having as a destination']
detached	3	2	[cat 1 (`separate; not connected') omitted]
detail(1)	5	3	[4 `in detail', 5 `go into detail'; now in cat 2]
detection	2	1	[`act of' and `work of' merged]
detention	3	2	[N-C category (`an example of...') omitted]
determination	5	3	[3(`fixing limits'), 5(`formal decision') omitted]
determine	4	3	[2(`decide') merged with 1(`form firm intention')]
detonation	2	1	[2(`noise') in brackets in cat 1]
detract from	2	1	[2(`say evil things about') omitted]
detriment	2	1	[N-C category (`cause of harm') omitted]
detritus	2	1	[1 (`heavier sewage') omitted]
deuce	7	3	[3 phrases omitted, one merged into cat 3]
devaluation	2	1	[separate monetary sense now `esp...' in one cat]
develop	5	6	[separate cat for `develop an interest/cold']

b) `petrochemical' to `phonetic'

	1978	1987
petticoat	2	1 [2 was (`of or by women; petticoat government')]
pettifogging	3	2 [3 was (`using dishonest tricks; esp. lawyers')]
pettish	2	1 [2 was (`of remarks, acts')]
petty	3	2 [cats for qualitative and classifying merged]
petunia	2	1 [2 was N-U (`dark-bluish colour')]
phalanx	3	3 [2a & 2b in 1978; 2b (`political') omitted]
pharisaic	2	1 [2 was (`of or like a PHARISEE')]
phase	4	3 [1b (`time during which stage lasts') omitted]
pheasant	2	1 [2 was N-U (`meat of this as food')]
phenomenal	3	2 [3 was (`fml, concerned with phenomena')]
phenomenally	2	1 [2 was (`fml, as a phenomenon')]
phew	3	1 [a (relief), b (tired), & c (shocked) merged]
phial	2	1 [2 was (`amount this will hold')]
philosopher	4	2 [student/originator merged; `deep thinker' lost]
philosophy	4	2 [`rule of life'=`fig' in `system'; `calmness' lost]
phonemic	3	1 [reduced to ~nemic in 1987]
phonemics	2	1 [2 was (`sounds of a partic. lang.')]
phonetic	3	2 [3 was (`of a language; spelled as it sounds')]

c) `taxi' to `technique' :

	1978	1987
taxi(2)	2	1 [b (`to pilot (a plane) along ground') omitted]
tea	7	6 [`one's cup of tea' cross-reffed to `cup']
teach	1	5 [cat 1 split into 3; + 2 phrases; + usage note]
teacup	3	1 [`teacupful' omitted; `storm in a..' now xref]
teak	2	1 [N-C `tree' and N-U `wood' merged]
teamster	2	1 [`person who drives team of animals' omitted]
tear(2)	10	12 [`limb from limb' & `That's torn it' added]
tease	4	3 [only vb in 1978; `also tease' at `teaser']
technical	4	5 [new 2b (`needing special knowledge')]
technician	1	2 [`SB who has a good technique' added]
technique	3	1 [`sport' omitted; N-C & N-U merged]

5. A simple numerical count shows that the number of numbered senses has been substantially reduced from 1978 to 1987:

totals for the three sections counted show a drop from 51 to 35, 48 to 28, and 39 to 38 respectively (overall drop 138 to 101). This has involved:

a) omission of rare/outdated senses (e.g. detritus, deuce, petticoat, petunia, pharisaic phenomenal)

b) merging of N-C/N-U, especially in natural world items (pheasant, teak) and `act of/instance of' distinctions.

c) interestingly enough, the only consistent area of increase is in the commoner words: (e.g. desperate 3 to 4, destined 1 to 2, develop 5 to 6, teach from 1 to 5, tear 10 to 12, technical 4 to 5, technician 1 to 2).

6. Changes of status : [some are changes in precise form of suffix]

1978

1987

despot	despot, ~ic, ~ically
despotic, ~ally	dessertspoonful (after `also..'
dessertspoonful (hwd)	at category 2 of dessertspoon)
detailed (hwd)	detail; ~ed
-detraction (derived word)	detraction (hwd)
phantasmal (hwd)	phantasm; -phantasmal
phantasmagoria	phantasmagoria; -ric, -rical
-phantasmagoric	
-phantasmagorical	
phenomenally (hwd)	phenomenal; ~ly
philander; -derer	philanderer; -dering
philatelist (hwd)	philately; -list
philological; -cally	philology; -gical, -gically, -gist
philologist (hwd)	
philosophical; -cally	philosophical; ~ly
phlegmatic; -ically	phlegmatic; ~ally
phoneme	
phonemic; ~ally	phoneme; -nemic, -nemically
tech..... (technical college)	technical college, also tech

7. Similar to the change in phrasal verb placement policy, many derived words which were given headword status in 1978 are demoted to run-ons in 1987. Thus, overall, although the same items may appear in both editions in one form or other, the number of `points of initial access' are fewer.

The space thus created has been used to amplify definitions and especially to provide more examples (see 8.)

8. 1978 (front cover flap): `over 69,000 example sentences and phrases'
 1987 (" " "): `over 75,000 lively natural examples'

A comparison of the two editions of LDOCE with regard to examples:

1978 (pp 812-3)

1987 (p 769; 2 cols)

the petrochemical industry	the petrochemical industry
	a petrochemical plant (= factory)
We can fill (the car) up with petrol at the petrol station.	We filled (the car) up with petrol before the long journey.
	Six gallons/litres of petrol, please.
	the petrol tank
	petrol fumes
	a petrol pump
	two star/four star petrol
	(= the number of stars showing the quality of the petrol)
	petroleum-based products
	I'm sick to death of those pettifogging bureaucrats!

Our difficulties seem petty when compared to those of people who never get enough to eat.	Our problems seem petty when compared to those of people who never get enough to eat.
petty acts of unkindness	petty crime petty spite
	Don't be so petty/petty-minded. "I won't!" she said petulantly. a pewter tankard to test the pH of the soil A phalanx of policemen bore down on the rioters.
phantom riders passing by in the night	phantom riders passing by in the night The phantom letter-writer has been here again; all my stationery has disappeared!
the phantoms that troubled his dreams	the phantoms that troubled his dreams Pharaoh Rameses II the large pharmaceutical companies an all-night pharmacy
a new and dangerous phase in the relations between the 2 nations	the new weapons system is still in the research phase. The election campaign has now entered a critical phase/its final phase.
the phases of the moon	the phases of the moon The carrier wave has got out of phase with the signal wave. The government is going to phase in the new pension scheme over five years. The bus service to country areas is being phased out.

9. The claim to have included more examples in the 1987 edition seems to be well substantiated by the above comparison. A numerical count of examples from `desperate' to `detention' (p 278 of 1987 edition, pp 297-8 of 1978 edition) shows 59 examples in 1987 against 40 in 1978. `Taxi' to `tea party' (p 1085 of 1987 edition, pp 1137-8 of 1978 edition) offers 41 in 1987 to 28 in 1978.

10. Defining vocabulary still 2000 words.

Comparing the lists given at the end of both editions, the following differences emerge:

1978	1987
able	---- [-able is in both]
above	above adv, prep
----	acceptable

account v,n	account
accustom v	----
ache v,n	ache
act v	act
action	action n
active	active adj
address v,n	address
----	admittance
----	adult
advance v,n	advance n,v
----	advertisement
affair(s)	affair
after adv, prep, conj	after adv, conj, prep
----	agreement
aim n,v	aim
----	aircraft
----	airforce
----	airport
alcohol(ic)	alcohol
alike adj, adv	alike
all adj, adv	all adv, determiner, predeterminer, pron
all right	----
altogether	altogether adv
amongst	----
----	amusement
ancient	ancient adj
anger n,v	anger n
angle	angle n
animal n,adj	animal
----	annoyance
answer n,v	answer
anybody	----
----	approval
April	----
arch, archway	arch
----	argument
arise	----
arm n,v	arm
armour n,v	armour n
around prep, adv	around
arrangement(s)	arrangement
----	arrival
arrow	----
----	artificial (sic - presumably artificial)
ash(es)	ash
atom(ic)	atom
attack n,v	attack
attempt n,v	attempt
----	attendance
attentive	----
August	----
average n,adj,v	average adj,n
away	away adv
axe n	----

11. The 1987 edition gives policy on defining vocabulary just before the list. The 1978 edition gives it in front matter (Section 0.3). The main difference is that the 1987 edition (p F34 of front matter) says that words that are not in the 2000-word defining vocabulary but that are defined within three entries are no longer printed in capitals. This has certainly helped to reduce the number of capitalised words in definitions substantially (e.g. desperation in 1987 is 'the state of being desperate' as against 'the state of being DESPERATE' in 1978) and therefore to present a more uniform and neater look to the page. Also, such typographic horrors as 'detachment 1 the act of DETACHing' in 1978 have gone.

12. a) The loss of 'able' in the 1987 edition is interesting - but it may just be a mistake: 'can' (cat 1), 'capable' (cat 3), and 'capacious' in 1987 all use 'able' in their definitions.

b) on the whole, words that are less current have gone (e.g. arrow, axe), less current word-classes have gone (e.g. armour and anger were 'n, v' in 1978, 1987 only allows 'n'), some items now specify word-class, probably to preclude archaic usages (e.g. 'ancient' and 'ancient, adj' to preclude the noun? 'angle' and 'angle, n' to preclude the verb?). Other words have lost their word-class specifications (e.g. 'answer, n,v' is now 'answer', 'alike, adj, adv' is now 'alike').

c) 'act' was allowed in 1978 only as 'v', although many definitions in 1978 used the 'the act of'/'an act of' strategy.

d) The 1987 edition includes several compounds (e.g. 'aircraft, airport') but surely 'airforce' is quite unusual as one word?

e) The 1987 edition lists derived forms such as 'agreement' although -ment is an acceptable suffix for defining vocabulary according to their own list.

f) comparing the lists of acceptable prefixes and suffixes, the two editions vary as follows:

1978	1987
-dom	----
en-	---- [both accept -en]
----	-ery
-ese	----
-hood	----
----	self-
-ure	----
vice-	----
well-	----

g) Here too we can see the dropping of older affixes (e.g.

`-dom', `-hood', `-ure'), the introduction of a more current use (self-), but the arrival of `-ery' is surely odd.

13. a) The grammar codes have been greatly simplified since 1978.

b) The 1987 front matter acknowledges that `most users found mnemonic codes offputting and impenetrable' (General Introduction, p F8) - but surely the point is that they were NOT `mnemonic' (e.g. `R' for `a noun that is a name or namelike', or `H' for `adv used with preposition and other adverbs', etc, etc).

c) The 1987 uses the simplified and more obvious codes already used in the Active Study Dictionary (NB `F' for `predicative'), adding only `L' for verbs needing a noun/adj complement. The 1987 expands on the number of structural codes (`[no comp], [+ that]', etc) in the ASD, raising them from 10 to 16 (adding [+ wh-], [+ v-ed], [not in progressive forms], etc).

d) The change from italic to bold for prepositional choice is a great improvement.

e) The 1987 edition uses an idea I'm pretty sure I suggested at the Leeds Euralex Conference: Hermann Wekker and Marcel Lemmens were suggesting giving the syntax patterns for each category of a word in code (e.g. [V+O, V+O+O, V+O+A]), followed by examples that reflected each pattern given. I suggested that even better would be to give each coded pattern directly next to the relevant example. The 1987 edition indeed gives the coded pattern in square brackets immediately before the example it represents.

14. The 1978 edition is described on the front cover flap as `fully illustrated' and the rear cover flap says `Clear informative illustrations are also included to supplement the definitions.' Most of the illustrations in the 1978 are certainly well executed, but the labelling is sometimes poor (e.g. `aircraft' : it would have been clearer if the names of the types of aircraft, such as biplane, glider, and airliner, were in bold, and many of the parts are not arrowed - e.g. propeller, undercarriage, fuselage, rudder). The level of detail is often astonishing (e.g. `American football').

The 1987 edition boasts `500 new helpful illustrations'. There are certainly a lot more illustrations in the 1987: comparing just the letters A and B, we find:

1978	1987
-----	abstract [abstract painting]
-----	acre
-----	ago [diagrammatic - not very successful?]
-----	aim [unnecessary?]
aircraft [several types]	aircraft [jet only]
American football [very detailed:	American football [action picture:

players and pitch]	players and clothing/equipment]
amphibians	-----
-----	anchor
-----	angle
-----	apes [x3]
arachnids	-----
-----	arch
-----	area
atomic structure	-----
-----	avalanche
-----	axe [x6]
-----	badger
-----	balance
-----	barbecue
-----	barrier
baseball [cf American football]	baseball [almost identical to
	1978; change from letter codes
	plus key to direct labelling]
-----	basin [x3]
-----	bat
bathroom [very detailed]	-----
-----	bears [x3]
-----	bed [x9]
bedroom	-----
-----	bend [problem of trying to
	depict actions by sequence of
	drawings]
berries & other fruits	berries
-----	bevel [not very common/useful]
bicycle	bicycle
-----	big cats [x7]
-----	billiards
-----	bin [x4]
birds [x12]	birds [x8; swift, crow,
	blackbird and starling omitted]
-----	blade [knife, grass, propeller]
-----	blinkers
-----	blot
-----	blossom [cf bend]
boats [x10]	boats [x2; + xrefs to
	dinghy, paddle, yacht]
-----	bolt
-----	boomerang [dotted line and
	arrow to show flight path]
-----	borrow [complex; arrows; position
	of example sentences]
-----	bottle [x6]
-----	bow
-----	bow
-----	box [no ordinary boxes; telephone box,
	sentry box, witness box]
-----	brand [branding cattle]
-----	brass instruments [x4]
-----	brushes [x7]

----- bulldoze [why not `bulldozer' ?]
----- burst

It is obvious from these lists that the 1987 undoubtedly contains many more illustrations than the 1978.

On the whole, the technical quality of the artwork itself is as good, if not better, than the 1978. However, many of the new illustrations are not wholly successful, because either they are trying to do too much (e.g. process and result at `blossom'), or seem inappropriate (e.g. `ago') , or illustrate very minor senses of a word (e.g. box, brand). In particular, from my quick skim through :

- a) the 1987 illustration at `pioneer' seems singularly useless
- b) 1987 `wreck' does not look particularly `wrecked'
- c) 1987 `witch' could be cat 1 (magic) or cat 2 (unpleasant/ugly) ?
- d) 1987 `vault' illustrates cat 3
- e) 1987 `spectre' could be almost anything
- f) 1987 `gulf' " " " "
- g) 1987 `frown'
- h) 1987 `frontier' would be better with a barbed wire fence
- i) 1987 `fray' is rather obscure
- j) 1987 `for' is very obscure
- k) 1987 `feeler' : the table leg or whatever is a bit unnecessary?
- l) 1987 `fault' requires some geological training?
- m) 1987 `estuary' : same criticism as `gulf'
- n) 1987 `erratic' : caption `an erratic heartbeat' requires very sophisticated lateral thinking, as well as knowledge of latest hospital cardiac monitoring equipment
- o) 1987 `engine' : surely this is a CAR engine; wot no sparkplugs ??
- p) 1987 `egghead' !!!!!
- q) 1987 `domino effect' : metaphor illustrated by literal
- r) 1987 `anchor' : is the `ship' under water ???
- s) 1987 `ago' : cf `for'

15. Changes in definitions/definition styles:

A close comparison of `petrochemical' to `phase':

1978

1987

PETROLEUM JELLY :

...used as a medicine for the skin and to make parts of machines work more smoothly
...used esp. as a medicine for the skin

PETROL STATION :

BrE FILLING STATION

BrE for FILLING STATION

PETTICOAT :

a type of skirt worn by women as an undergarment
a woman's undergarment which hangs from the shoulders or waist

Egypt

PHARISEE:

...something (esp. a religion) something, esp. a religion,
compared with its true meaning rather than its true meaning

PHARMACIST :

2 fml a person who sells medicine; 2 BrE||druggist AmE - fml a skilled
CHEMIST (3) person who owns or runs a pharmacy;
CHEMIST (2)

PHARMACOPOEIA :

1...(esp. of one particular country) 1

PHARMACY :

2 ...where medicines are given out or 1 fml ...where medicines are sold
sold; CHEMIST's (3) (shop) - compare DISPENSARY, DRUGSTORE

1 the making and/or giving out... 2 (the study of) the making...

PHARYNGITIS :

sore throat a medical condition that
includes soreness of the throat

PHASE :

2 ...or a body (PLANET) moving round 2 [(of)]...a PLANET as seen...
the sun as seen...

16. Several changes are apparent: cross-referencing policy,
typeface selection, reduction in use of brackets, loss of `a
type of' strategy, etc.

- a) great simplification of syntax at PHARAOH
- b) much better def at PHAGOCYTE [destroying ("eating") foreign bodies!!]
- c) gloss at PEW [(= sit down)] helps a bit
BUT
- d) introduction of brackets at PHARMACY to add yet another
sense by the back door [(the study of)]
- e) loss of people/things distinction at PETTIFOGGING and
PETTISH