

# Incorporating Context into Dictionary Representation

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# Representing context in dictionary entries

- Traditional view of word meaning → traditional type of dictionary entry
- “Revolution” of corpus linguistics and its implications for lexicography
- Non-traditional view of word meaning → non-traditional types of dictionary entries?

# Identification of discrete senses (polysemy)

## Example: *pass* verb in the Collins English Dictionary

verb

1. to go onwards or move by or past (a person, thing, etc)
2. to run, extend, or lead through, over, or across (a place) ⇒ the route passes through the city
3. to go through or cause to go through (an obstacle or barrier) ⇒ to pass a needle through cloth
4. to move or cause to move onwards or over ⇒ he passed his hand over her face
5. *tr* to go beyond or exceed ⇒ this victory passes all expectation
6. to gain or cause to gain an adequate or required mark, grade, or rating in (an examination, course, etc) ⇒ the examiner passed them all
7. *often foll by away* or *by* to elapse or allow to elapse ⇒ we passed the time talking
8. See [pass the time of day with someone](#)
9. *intr* to take place or happen ⇒ what passed at the meeting?

10. to speak or exchange or be spoken or exchanged ⇒ angry words passed between them
11. to spread or cause to spread ⇒ we passed the news round the class
12. to transfer or exchange or be transferred or exchanged ⇒ the bomb passed from hand to hand
13. *ntr* to undergo change or transition ⇒ to pass from joy to despair
14. *when tr*, often followed by *down* to transfer or be transferred by inheritance ⇒ the house passed to the younger son
15. to agree to or sanction or to be agreed to or receive the sanction of a legislative body, person of authority, etc ⇒ the assembly passed 10 resolutions
16. *tr* (of a legislative measure) to undergo (a procedural stage) and be agreed ⇒ the bill passed the committee stage
17. *when tr*, often followed by *on* or *upon* to pronounce or deliver (judgment, findings, etc) ⇒ the court passed sentence
18. to go or allow to go without comment or censure ⇒ the intended insult passed unnoticed

- 19.. *intr* to opt not to exercise a right, as by not answering a question or not making a bid or a play in card games
20. (*physiology*) to discharge (urine, faeces, etc) from the body
21. See [pass water](#)
22. *intr* to come to an end or disappear ⇒ his anger soon passed
23. *intr*; usually foll by *for* or *as* to be likely to be mistaken for or accepted as (someone or something else) ⇒ you could easily pass for your sister
24. *intr*; foll by *away*, *on*, or *over* a euphemism for [die<sup>1</sup> \(sense 1\)](#)
25. *tr* (*mainly US*) to fail to declare (a dividend)
26. *intr*; usually foll by *on* or *upon* (*mainly US*) (of a court, jury, etc) to sit in judgment; adjudicate
27. (*sport*) to hit, kick, or throw (the ball) to another player
28. See [bring to pass](#)
29. See [come to pass](#)

## Example: *pass* verb in the Collins English Dictionary

- 29 senses for the verb *pass*
- Followed by a long list of phrasal verbs
- Followed by a long entry for the noun *pass*

# Collins English Dictionary is not alone in this approach

- American Heritage Dictionary lists:
  - 19 senses for *pass* used as an intransitive verb
  - 11 senses for *pass* used as a transitive verb
  - 11 senses for *pass* as a noun
- In the traditional dictionary representation, the word *pass* is a bundle of 41 seemingly unrelated meanings
- No obvious relation between the verb senses and then noun senses

## Relationship between the verb and the derived noun senses? (American Heritage Dictionary)

7. **a.** To cause to be transferred from one to another; circulate: They passed the news quickly.
- b.** To hand over to someone else: Please pass the bread.
- c.** Sports To transfer (a ball, for example) to a teammate, as by throwing.
- d.** To cause to be accepted; circulate fraudulently: pass counterfeit money.
- e.** Law To convey (property) to an heir or heirs: to pass an estate.



# Consequences of traditional view of word meaning and traditional dictionary representation

- Artificial divisions of word meaning
- No clear differentiation between a basic, core meaning and the context in which a sense is typically used
- As represented, the various senses are usually unrelated to one another
- In languages like English, in which the relationship between form and lexical class is not always obvious (and, as a result, English allows rampant conversion from one word class to another), no relation between derived senses across lexical class

# One more example of the same: *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English* (*pass*, partial definition)

**MOVE** 1 to move past or to the other side of somebody/something

2 to go or move in the direction mentioned

3 to make something move in the direction or into the position mentioned

**GIVE** 4 to give something to somebody by putting it into their hands or in a place where they can easily reach it

**BALL** 5 (in ball games) to kick, hit or throw the ball to a player of your own side

**AFTER DEATH** to be given to another person after first belonging to somebody else, especially after the first person has died

**BECOME GREATER** 7 (of an amount) to become greater than a particular total

**CHANGE** 8 to change from one state or condition to another

**TIME** 9 when time passes, it goes by

10 to spend time, especially when you are bored or waiting for something

## Possible improvements

- Reconsider the role of corpus data in lexicography
  - Not just for finding good examples
  - Rather, actual use of words should tell us more about how speakers shape meanings
- Incorporate the idea of prototypes into definitions
- Prototypes lead to broader generalizations
- Broader generalizations imply indicating contextual information clearly, possibly by increasing the use of labels

## Possible improvements

- Broader definitions need more examples
- More examples result in long entries that users do not like
  - Two-tiered approach
  - DAELE *Diccionario de aprendizaje del español como lengua extranjera*
    - User clicks on whether he wants to see more or fewer examples

## Possible improvements

- Better representation of the relationship existing between related senses
- Different lexical classes that share the same word form should be a part of the same entry
  - This is done in many dictionaries, but they still do not show you which noun sense is related to which verb sense

**pass** *verb*

# Oxford Dictionary of English

1. move or cause to move in a specified direction: [no *obj.*, with *adverbial of direction*] : *he passed through towns and villages* | *a plane was passing lazily overhead* | [with *obj.* and *adverbial of direction*] : *he passed a weary hand across his forehead* | *pass an electric current through it.*
  - [no *obj.*, with *adverbial of direction*] change from one state or condition to another: *homes which have passed from public to private ownership.*
  - [no *obj.*] *euphemistic, chiefly N. Amer. die: I was with him the night he passed.*
2. [with *obj.*] go past or across; leave behind or on one side in proceeding: *on the way to the station she passed a cinema* | *the two vehicles had no room to pass each other* | [no *obj.*] : *we will not let you pass.*
  - go beyond the limits of; surpass or exceed: *the Portuguese trade passed its peak in the 1760s* | *this item has passed its sell-by date.*
  - (*Tennis*) hit a winning shot past (an opponent).
3. [no *obj.*] (of time) elapse; go by: *the day and night passed slowly.*
  - [with *obj.*] spend or use up (a period of time): *this was how they passed the time.*
  - come to an end: *the danger had passed.*
  - happen; be done or said: *not another word **passed between** them* | [with *complement*] : *this fact has passed almost unnoticed.*

4. [with *obj.* and usu. with *adverbial of direction*] transfer (something) to someone, especially by handing or bequeathing it to the next person in a series: *your letter has been passed to Mr Rich for action* | *pass the milk* | *the poem was passed from generation to generation* | [with *two objs*] : *he passed her a cup.*
- [no *obj.*, with *adverbial*] be transferred from one person or place to another, especially by inheritance: *if Ann remarried the estate would pass to her new husband.*
  - (in soccer, rugby, and other games) kick, hit, or throw (the ball) to another player of one's own side: *his intent was to pass the ball forward rather than knock it back.*
  - put (something, especially money) into circulation: *persons who have passed bad cheques.*
  - [no *obj.*] (especially of money) circulate; be current: *racegoers had formed card schools, and cash was passing briskly.*
5. [with *obj.*] (of a candidate) be successful in (an examination, test, or course): *she passed her driving test.*
- judge the performance or standard of (someone or something) to be satisfactory: [with *obj.* and *complement*] : *he was passed fit by army doctors.*
  - [no *obj.*] (**pass as/for**) be accepted as or taken for: *he could pass for a native of Sweden.*
  - [no *obj.*] be accepted as adequate; go unremarked: *she couldn't agree, but let it pass.*

6. (of a legislative or other official body) approve or put into effect (a proposal or law) by voting on it: *the bill was passed despite fierce opposition.*
- [no *obj.*] (of a proposal) be approved by a legislative or other official body: *the Bill passed by 164 votes to 107.*
7. [with *obj.*] pronounce (a judgement or judicial sentence): ***passing judgement on these crucial issues*** | *it is now my duty to **pass sentence upon** you.*
- utter (something, especially criticism): *she would pass remarks about the Peebles in their own house.*
  - [no *obj.*] (**pass on/upon**) *archaic* adjudicate or give a judgement on: *a jury could not be trusted to pass upon the question of Endacott's good faith.*
8. [with *obj.*] discharge (something, especially urine or faeces) from the body: *she may have difficulty in passing urine.*
9. [no *obj.*] forgo one's turn in a game or an offered opportunity to do or have something: *we **pass on** pudding and have coffee.*
- [as *exclamation*] said when one does not know the answer to a question, for example in a quiz: *to the enigmatic question we answered 'Pass'.*
  - [with *obj.*] (of a company) not declare or pay (a dividend): *the company has already passed its interim dividend.*
  - (*Bridge*) make no bid when it is one's turn during an auction: *South bids 1NT. North passes.*



# Summary

- 9 main senses: grouping together of previously independent senses
  5. [with *obj.*] (of a candidate) be successful in (an examination, test, or course): *she passed her driving test.*
    - judge the performance or standard of (someone or something) to be satisfactory:[with *obj.* and *complement*] : *he was passed fit by army doctors.*
    - [no *obj.*] (**pass as/for**) be accepted as or taken for: *he could pass for a native of Sweden.*
    - [no *obj.*] be accepted as adequate; go unremarked: *she couldn't agree, but let it pass.*
- Corresponds to senses 5, 6, 18 and 23 in Collins English Dictionary