

The Thesaurus is Your Friend

If not your acquaintance, pal, buddy, companion, comrade, ally, associate, contact, or colleague...

In the thesaurus, each synonym for "friendly" has a slightly different meaning.

friendly 62.5;

amicably 62.13,

Pleasant, kindly, benign.

harmless 73.9,

Doing or causing no harm; inoffensive, innocuous.

pacificatory 74.8,

Tending to make peace.

sensitive 267.3,

Naturally perceptive of the feelings of others; tactful, sympathetic, compassionate.

likable 271.6, 290.7,

Easy to like; pleasant, agreeable.

loving 299.15,

Inspiring or deserving love or affection; amiable; attractive, pleasing.

benevolent 305.7,

Desirous of the good of others; of a kindly disposition; charitable.

sociable 408.11,

Inclined to seek and enjoy the company of others; disposed to be friendly, affable or conversational in company.

courteous 410.6,

Polite, kind, considerate, in manner or approach.

kind 445.12,

Having or displaying a gentle, sympathetic, or benevolent disposition; showing consideration for others.

agreeing 462.6,

Make agreeable or harmonious.

Why Use a Thesaurus?

A thesaurus can help you to find and use new words, avoid repetition, and find just the right way to express yourself. If you are searching your brain for the perfect word and it is right on the tip of your tongue, head to the reference shelf for the thesaurus. (You can also use MS Word's built-in thesaurus by right-clicking on any word in a document.)

Using a thesaurus will help you with the tone of your papers and help you build stronger arguments. When you select the word with the most specific meaning, you are making an important choice about what you are trying to say—the mark of the sophisticated writer.

The Basics of Thesaurus Use

1. The typical thesaurus consists of an alphabetical section and a numbered one.

To use the thesaurus, look up your word in the alphabetical section. Review the associated words, like the synonyms for "friendly" on the left. Each word will have a slightly different meaning. Find the one (or more) that is closest to what you are trying to say and make a note of the number that follows (like 62.5).

If you don't know the specific meaning of a word or synonym, **use the dictionary!**

2. Turn to the numbered "chapter" (62) and "section" (5), and review the synonyms for your original word. While you might find a great synonym in the alphabetical section, you will have far more choices if you follow up in the numbers.
3. Look for the word that fits the best in your sentence and your overall paper, not necessarily the biggest or most dramatic word.
4. Sometimes, you can find additional synonyms in surrounding sections, much like finding related books in the same area of a library. So, look around once you are in the numbered section.
5. If you are on a computer connected to the Internet, consider using a Web site. Some options are **www.thesaurus.com** (traditional) or **www.visualthesaurus.com** (visual mapping) or **www.wordsmyth.net** (combination thesaurus and dictionary).

Synonyms: Pitha, E.W. et al (Eds.). (1996). *Bartlett's Roget's Thesaurus* (First ed.). New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Definitions: Brown, L. et al (Eds.). (2002). *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Fifth ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.