Synonyms

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A **synonym** is a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another [lexeme](word or phrase) in the same language. Words that are synonyms are said to be **synonymous**, and the state of being a synonym is called **synonymy**.

For example, the words *begin*, *start*, *commence*, and *initiate* are all synonyms of one another. Words are typically synonymous in one particular [sense](): for example, *long* and *extended* in the [context]() *long time* or *extended time* are synonymous, but *long* cannot be used in the phrase *extended family*.

Synonyms with the exact same meaning share a seme or denotational sememe, whereas those with inexactly similar meanings share a broader denotational or connotational sememe and thus overlap within a semantic field. The former are sometimes called cognitive synonyms and the latter, near-synonyms, plesionyms or poecilonyms.

Some [lexicographers](#) claim that no synonyms have exactly the same meaning (in all contexts or social levels of language) because [etymology](#), [orthography](#), phonic qualities, ambiguous meanings, usage, and so on make them unique. Different words that are similar in meaning usually differ for a reason: *feline* is more formal than *cat*; *long* and *extended* are only synonyms in one usage and not in others (for example, a *long arm* is not the same as an *extended arm*).

[Metonymy](#) can sometimes be a form of synonymy: *the [White House](#)* is used as a synonym of *the administration* in referring to the U.S. [executive branch](#) under a specific president. Thus a metonym is a type of synonym, and the word *metonym* is a [hyponym](#) of the word *synonym*.

The analysis of synonymy, polysemy, hyponymy, and hypernymy is inherent to taxonomy and ontology in the information-science senses of those terms. It has applications in pedagogy and machine learning, because they rely on word-sense disambiguation.

Thank you for attention