

# Finding the Roots of Language Using a Dictionary

## Where do words come from?

- Many words in the English language are derived from words in other languages. Dictionaries usually provide information about the derivation of words. In this activity, you will peruse an electronic dictionary or encyclopedia looking for words that have their derivation in other languages.
- For print dictionaries:  
The abbreviations below are used as examples:

FR -- French

fr. -- from

Gk -- Greek

L -- Latin

MD -- Middle Dutch

The abbreviation guide is usually found near the beginning of a print dictionary. Example:

- **blare** [fr. MD *blaren* to shout]  
**cir - cle** [fr. L *circus* circle; Gk *kirkos* ring] **dis-tant** [fr. FR *distant* remote]  
**es-pi-o-nage** [fr. FR *espion* spy]  
**force** [fr. L *fortis* strong]

# Origins of Language Assignment

## Assignment:

- (1) First, find ten *interesting* words -- each beginning with a different letter of the alphabet -- for which you can document word origin/derivation from another language. Start with [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com).
- (2) Second, research the roots/origins of modern-day Romance languages, such as Spanish, French, Italian, etc. In about 8-10 sentences, summarize the origins of Romance languages as well as argue in support of one of the many origin-of-language theories out there, as proposed by prominent linguists. Where should you go to find this information? Start with:
  - <http://www.putlearningfirst.com/language/01origin/history1.html>
  - <http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/langorigins.html>
  - <http://www.answers.com/topic/origin-of-language>

