

A Basic Chaucer Glossary

The 100 most common words are in bold type.

adoun: down
agast(e): afraid; frighten
agayn(s): against, toward
ago, ago(o)n: gone; ago
al: all
al, al be that: although
alderbest: best of all
als, also: as, also
an: an; on
anon: at once
artow: art thou, thou art
arwe: arrow
as: as, as if, like
atte: at, at the
aventure: chance
axe: ask
ay: always

been: are
benedicite: bless us!
bet: better
beth: are; (imperative) be
bitwixen: between
blake: black
blyve: quickly, soon
brenne: burn
breste, brast: burst
brestring: bursting
but, but if: unless

can, kan: know, be able
canstow: can you, you can
cas: happening, chance
certes: surely, certainly
certeyn: certainly, sure(ly)
chees, chese(n): choose, chose chosen
cheere, chiere: facial expression
clepe(n): call
clerk: scholar
conne: learn, can
conseil: secret, advice
coude: could
coy: quiet

deel: bit
delit: delight, pleasure
deme: judge, suppose
devyse: tell (of), describe
deye: die
dorste: dare, dared
dout: doubt
dout, out of: beyond doubt
drede: doubt; dread, fear

ech: each
echo(o)n: each one
eek, eke: also
elles, ellis: else
entente: intent, attention
er, or: before; formerly
ese: pleasure
everich: every; every one

fay, fey: faith
fere, feere: companion
fele, feele: many
ferre: farther
fil: fell, happened
flour: flower; flour
for: for; because
forthy: therefore
foryeve: forgive
free: generous, gracious, liberal
fro: from

game: fun
gan, gonne: began
go(on): go
goost: soul, spirit
gyse: guise, manner, way; plan

han: have
hastow: have you, you have
heigh: high
hem: them
hem lost (or liste): they wanted
hende: ready to hand, convenient, handy;
pleasant, courteous, gentle
hente: take, seize, get
here: her

hewe: hue, color
hight: named, called
him lest (list): he wants (lit., "it is pleasing to him")
hir(e): her, their

ich: I
ilke: same

kan: know; know how to; can
keep(e), kepe: heed
konne: learn; know how to; can
konnyng: skill, knowledge
koude: knew; knew how to; could
kynde: nature

lasse: less
lese: lose
lest(e): please, pleases, pleased (impersonal);
hem (him) leste, liste; they (he) wanted
lete: leave, forsake, abandon
lette: forbear, desist, hinder
le(e)ve: dear
liggen: to lie
like, liketh: it please(s)
list(e): it pleased, it pleases
lite: little
lith: lies
lust: pleasure, desire
lusty: lusty; joyous; pleasant; vigorous

maad: made
maistow, maystow: may you, you may
make: mate, husband, make
maner(e): kind of, manner
maugre: in spite of
mede: reward
met(te): dream
mo: more
mooste: most; greatest
moot(e) (n): may, must, ought to; so (also,
ever) moot I: as I hope to
morewe: morrow, morning
mowe: may
muche(l): much, many (a)

nam: am not
namely: especially, specifically
namo, namoore: no more
nas: was not
nat: not
nathelees: nevertheless
ne: not, nor

nerre: were not
niste: did not know
noght: nought, nothing; not
bolde: would not
nones, nonys: occasion
noon: none, no
noot: know not
nyce: foolish
nys: is not
nyste: knew not

o, oo, on, oon, that oon: one
of: of; off
ones, onis: once
outrely: utterly, entirely

pace: go, proceed
pardee: (a common oath, lit. "by God"),
certainly
parfit: perfect
pleyne: complain, lament; full
povre: poor
prime, pryme: 9 A.M.
pryvely, prively: secretly

quit(te), quyte: requite, repay
quod: said

rathe: early, soon
rede: advise; interpret; read
reed: counsel; (verb) advise
rekke(th): heed(s), care(s)
right: (adverb): just, quite
routhe: pity

saugh, say, seigh: saw
seistow: you say
seith: says

seke: seek
sely: innocent, simple
sentence: moaning, opinion, sentiments, subject
matter
seyde: said
seye: say
shaltow: you shall
shape, shoope (reflexive): plan, planned
shrewe: scoundrel, wretch
sikerly: certainly, sruely, truly
sith: since; then
slawe, yslawe: slain
sola(a)s: pleasure, entertainment
somdel: somewhat
somyte: once, sometimes
so(o)re: bitterly, sorely
sooth, soothfastnesse, sothe: truth knowest;
know
so(o)the, soothly: truly do; in
spedde him: hastened
squier: squire
stente, stynte: cease, stop, restrain
sperte: started
steven: voice
suffre: permit, endure
sweven, e, -es, -ys: dream(s)
swich: sauch
swynk, swynken: work given
syke: sick
syn: since

task: taketh: take
than(ne): then; than
thee(n): prosper; so moot I
thee: as I hope to prosper
ther, ther as: where
thilke: this, that, at that
tho: those; then
thoght: thought; anxiety
thoughte (impersonal): it seemed
thurgh: through
thynketh (impersonal): it seems
til: until, to
to: to, too
trewe: true
trowe: believe

tweye: two

unnethe(s): scarcely

verray: true, veritable
vileynye: rudeness, shamefulspeech or deed

war: aware; be (beth) war(e), a ware yow:

beware, take heed
wende, -en, -eth: go, pass
wene, -eth: think, thinks

werre: war

what: what; why

wher: where; whether

wher as: where

which that: which, who

whylom: once, once upon a time, formerly

wight: person, thing

wist, wiste: known, knew

wol: will

wood: crazy, demented, wild

woodnesse: madness

woot, woost: know, knows, knowest

wostow: you know, do you know

worthy: distinguished, well to good social
standing

wroghte: made, did, worked

wydwe: widow

yaf: gave

ycleped: named

ydo: done

ye(n): eye(s)

yeve, -en, -est, -eth: give, given

yifte: gift

ynogh: enough

ysene: seen

yvel(e): evil, evilly

ywis: surely, certainly