NAME

webster − look up words in the dictionary

SYNOPSIS

webster [−**d**] [−**s**] [*words*]

DESCRIPTION

Webster is used to look up words in the online copy of Webster's 7th dictionary. If words are given as arguments to the program, they will be looked up and their definitions printed. If no arguments are given, **webster** enters interactive mode, and prompts for words to be defined.

In interactive mode, you will be prompted with ''Word: ''. Just type the word you want defined, or simply type a blank line to exit. If the word is found, **webster** will then provide the complete dictionary entry for the word including definitions, pronunciation, and derivation. If the specified word was not found, **webster** will try to find close matches, as if you spelled the word wrong. The possibilities are numbered and typed out. To select one of them, you can just give its number.

By preceding a word with ''!'', the spelling of the word can be checked instead of its definition. **webster** will check the spelling of the word, and will indicate whether it is spelled correctly or not. If the word is misspelled, **webster** will try to provide a list of alternate spellings.

Additionally, **webster** can match words using wildcards. The character '%' in a word means match exactly one character, so ''w%n'' matches ''win'', ''won'', ''wan'', etc. The character '∗' matches *zero or more* characters, so ''a∗d''matches ''ad'', ''and'', ''abound'', ''absentminded'', and so on. Any number of wildcards can be used, and in any arrangement.

The ESC (escape) and '?' characters also perform special functions. Typing a partial word, followed by ESC, tries to complete what you have typed so far. If what you have typed is a unique abbreviation for a word, the word is typed out. If what you typed is ambiguous, **webster** will beep at you and do nothing. Typing '?' at the end of a partial word will print out all the possible endings for the word you typed. If there are no possible endings, **webster** will beep at you and do nothing.

EXAMPLES

Word: *plur?*
Maybe you mean:

1. plural	2. pluralism	3. plurality	4. pluralization
5. pluralize	6. pluri-	7. pluriaxial	

Word: *pluri?*
Maybe you mean:

	1. pluri-	2. pluriaxial

Word: *pluria<ESC>*xial

Where the text in italics is typed by the user, and the rest by **webster**. Note that wildcards may be used in conjunction with ESC and '?', for example

Word: *plu∗x<ESC>*
Word: pluriaxial

OPTIONS

The −**d** and −**s** options may be used to put **webster** into *define* or *spell* mode, respectively. These modes indicate what **webster** does with words (define them or check their spellings). The inverse mode is available using the ''!'' as described above.

SEE ALSO

look(1), **spell**(1), **websterd**(8)

BUGS

The translation between all the neat special characters in the dictionary such as upside-down e's, cedillas, accent marks, etc. and a simple ASCII terminal is marginal at best. Most of the characters are fairly well faked, but a few of them are impossible. In particular, the schwa (upside-down e) is represented by an asterisk.

Occasionally, when you type a word to the prompt, another prompt appears without the word being defined. If this happens, try typing the word again. If it still doesn't work, exit the program and start again.

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