

THE BASICS

Common Shakespeare Usage

Word or Phrase	Definition	Example
alack/alas	an exclamation of sorrow or regret	Alack , I am afraid they have awaked, (<i>Macbeth</i> , 2.2)
an	if and	No; an he were, I would burn my study. (<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> , 1.1) To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face. (<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , 5.1)
anon	soon	Of this discourse we more will hear anon . (<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , 4.1)
apace	quickly	Gallop apace , you fiery-footed steeds, (<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , 3.2)
assay	try	Did you assay him? To any pastime? (<i>Hamlet</i> , 3.1)
aught	anything	If aught possess thee from me, it is dross, (<i>The Comedy of Errors</i> , 2.2)
away	go; get on with	Come, sir, away . (<i>The Winter's Tale</i> , 1.2)
ay/Aye	yes	The pretty wretch left crying and said " ay ." (<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , 1.3)
belike	perhaps	Belike this show imports the argument of the play. (<i>Hamlet</i> , 3.1)
besrew	curse	Beshrew his soul for me, (<i>Twelfth Night</i> , 4.1)
bid	command; tell	Achilles bids me say, he is much sorry, (<i>Troilus & Cressida</i> , 2.3)
brave	appropriate handsome, courageous	I'll devise thee brave punishments for him. (<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> , 5.4) Adieu, brave Moor, use Desdemona well. (<i>Othello</i> , 1.3)
break	reveal	Then after to her father will I break ; (<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> , 1.1)
but	only, except	My life I never held but as a pawn (<i>King Lear</i> , 1.1)

by my troth	by my pledge; truly	By my troth , I take my young lord to be a very melancholy man. (<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> , 3.2)
by your leave	with your permission	By your leave , hostess. (<i>Macbeth</i> , 1.6)
coil	distress, trouble	You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you: (<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , 3.2)
couch	to go to sleep	His body couched in a curious bed, (<i>Henry VI Part 3</i> , 2.5)
doff	take off	Romeo, doff thy name, / And for that name which is no part of thee Take all myself. (<i>Romeo & Juliet</i> , 2.2)
draw	comes near Bring together pull out	Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour / Draws on apace; (<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> 1.1) O blessed breeding sun, draw from the earth / Rotten humidity; (<i>Timon of Athens</i> 4.3) Draw thy feard sword (<i>Two Noble Kinsmen</i> , 1.1)
ere	before	We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart. (<i>Hamlet</i> , 1.2)
fain	gladly	I would fain dissuade him, (<i>As You Like It</i> , 1.2)
fie	an exclamation of dismay or disgust	Fie, fie! unknit that threatening unkind brow, (<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> , 5.2)
give me leave to	allow me to	Beseech you, give me leave to retire myself. (<i>Coriolanus</i> , 1.3)
good morrow	good morning/day	Good morrow , Brutus; do we trouble you? (<i>Julius Caesar</i> , 2.1)
haply	perhaps	Haply I see a friend will save my life (<i>The Comedy of Errors</i> , 5.1)
happy	fortunate	O happy Leonatus! (<i>Cymbeline</i> , 1.6)
hark	listen	Hark! the land bids me tread no more upon't; (<i>Antony & Cleopatra</i> , 3.11)
hath	Has	The earth hath bubbles, (<i>Macbeth</i> , 1.3)
hence	so from now on there get away	Hence I took a thought, (<i>Henry VIII</i> , 2.4) And I'll be sworn I have power to shame him hence . (<i>Henry IV Part 1</i> , 3.1) From hence you be committed to the Tower; (<i>Henry VIII</i> , 5.3) Hence! home, you idle creatures get you home: (<i>Julius Caesar</i> , 1.1)

hie	hurry	Hie thee thither, (<i>Pericles</i> , 5.1)
ho	hey	Philemon, ho! (<i>Pericles</i> , 3.2)
hold	remain	Thou sayest well, and it holds well too; (<i>Henry IV Part 1</i> , 1.2)
issue	result	Grow this to what adverse issue it can, I will put it in practise. (<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> , 2.2)
learn	teach; learn	Hast thou not learn'd me how To make perfumes? (<i>Cymbeline</i> , 1.5)
mark	pay attention to	Read thou this challenge; mark but the penning of it. (<i>King Lear</i> , 4.6)
marry	indeed (a mild oath)	Marry , that's a bountiful answer that fits all / questions. (<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> , 2.2)
meet	suitable	Sirs, strive no more: such wither'd herbs as these / Are meet for plucking up, (<i>Titus Andronicus</i> , 3.1)
methinks	it seems to me; I think	Methinks Samson had small reason for it. (<i>Love's Labor's Lost</i> , 1.2)
note	notice	That they may fairly note this act of mine! (<i>Twelfth Night</i> , 4.3)
perchance	perhaps	Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show; (<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , 5.1)
pray/prithee	beg; please	I pray now, keep below. (<i>The Tempest</i> , 1.1) Prithee , say on: (<i>The Tempest</i> , 2.1)
repair	go	Repair to Pompey's porch, where you shall find us. (<i>Julius Caesar</i> , 1.3)
sans	without	That ends this strange eventful history, / Is second childishness and mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything. (<i>As You Like It</i> , 2.7)
saucy	cheeky; sassy	We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs; (<i>Othello</i> , 1.1)
save	except	Unstaid and skittish in all motions else, / Save in the constant image of the creature That is beloved. (<i>Twelfth Night</i> , 2.4)
sirrah	a term of address for inferiors (sir)	Go with him, sirrah . (<i>As You Like It</i> , 3.2)

soft	wait a moment	But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? (<i>Romeo & Juliet</i> , 2.2)
stay	detain/stop; wait	Stay ; come not in. (<i>Cymbeline</i> , 3.6) When I am in my coach, which stays for us / At the park gate (<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , 3.4)
troth	truth, oath, good faith	For virtue's office never breaks men's troth . (<i>Love's Labor's Lost</i> , 5.2)
vein	mood or feeling	I am not in the giving vein today. (<i>Richard III</i> , 4.2)
vile	hateful	'Tis a vile thing to die, my gracious lord, (<i>Richard III</i> , 3.2)
visage	face or countenance	O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now! (<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , 4.1)
want	lack	Only, we want a little personal strength; (<i>Henry IV Part 2</i> , 4.4)
warrant	promise	I warrant thee. Meet me by and by at the citadel: (<i>Othello</i> , 2.1)
whence	where	To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, (<i>Coriolanus</i> , 1.3)
wherefore	why	O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo? (<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , 2.2)
withal	with, with it; wholly; notwithstanding	You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal (<i>Hamlet</i> , 2.2)
would	wish	I would my father look'd but with my eyes. (<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , 1.1)
yonder	over there	Look, where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear. (<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , 3.2)

Please Note: This is not a complete list but is a great starting place.

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Common Shakespeare Usage

Special Categories

Word	Definition	Example
Thee, Thou, Thy, Thine		
<p><i>Thee</i> (as a subject) is mostly used by lower classes, and <i>You</i> (as a subject) mostly by the lower.</p>		
thee	you (as object)	Thy wife is proud; she holdeth thee in awe, (<i>Henry VI, Part 1, 1.1</i>)
thou	you (as subject)	Thou canst help time to furrow me with age, (<i>Richard II, 1.3</i>)
thy	your	I see thy fury: (<i>Henry VI, Part 2, 1.1</i>)
thine	Your before vowels	Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine. (<i>Richard III, 1.2</i>)
	your before "hi" ("h" in honesty" pronounced	That livest to make thine honesty a vice! (<i>Othello, 3.3</i>)
	your after preposition	Those eyes of thine from mine have drawn salt tears, (<i>Richard III, 1.2</i>)
Art, Canst, Shalt, Wilt		
<p>Add "t" or "st" to <i>are, will, can, shall, etc.</i></p>		
art	are	Art thou his friend (<i>Henry V, 4.1</i>)
canst	can	I know thou canst ; (<i>The Comedy of Errors, 2.2</i>)
shalt	shall	And thou shalt woo her. (<i>Merry Wives or Windsor, 2.3</i>)
wilt	will	Wilt thou be gone? (<i>Two Gentlemen of Verona, 1.1</i>)
Direction Words		
hither	here	Come hither , gentlemen, (<i>Hamlet, 1.5</i>)
thither	there	Me too, let me go thither . (<i>The Winter's Tale, 2.4</i>)
whither	where	And whither go they? (<i>Troilus and Cressida, 1.2</i>)

Do, Does, Don't, Did, etc.

The auxiliary verbs *do, does, don't, did, etc.* were not used as we use them today.

Don't be afraid = **Be not afeared** (*The Tempest*, 2.2)

Don't pursue me = **Pursue me not** (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1)

Did he frown once? = So **frown'd he** once (*Hamlet*, 1.1)

Did he send [for] Macduff? = **Sent he** to Macduff? (*Macbeth* 3.6)

Dost	Do	Dost thou think I'll grace thee with that robbery, (<i>Coriolanus</i> , 5.6)
Doth	Does	Doth Lear walk thus? (<i>King Lear</i> , 1.3)

Contractions and Omissions

'tis	It is	'Tis certain so; (<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> ; 1.1)
'twas	It was	Patience, I pray you; 'twas a fault unwilling. (<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> , 4.1)
Ope	Open	Thy crystal window ope ; (<i>Cymbeline</i> , 5.4)
O'er	Over	Returning were as tedious as go o'er : (<i>Macbeth</i> , 3.4)
Ne'er	Never	and creep time ne'er so slow, (<i>King John</i> , 3.3)
I'	In	Go to, i' faith (<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> , 1.1)
O'	On	A plague o' both your houses! (<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , 3.1)
e'er	Ever	This is the first truth that e'er thine own tongue was guilty of. (<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> , 4.1)
Oft	Often	I oft found both: (<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , 1.1)
a	he	Well, let his father be what a' will, we talk of young Master Launcelot. (<i>Merchant of Venice</i> , 2.2)

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