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

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

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

soft	wait a moment	But, **soft**! what light through yonder window breaks? (*Romeo & Juliet*, 2.2)
stay	detain/stop; wait	**Stay**; come not in. (*Cymbeline*, 3.6) When I am in my coach, which **stays** for us / At the park gate (*The Merchant of Venice*, 3.4)
troth	truth, oath, good faith	For virtue's office never breaks men's **troth**. (*Love's Labor's Lost*, 5.2)
vein	mood or feeling	I am not in the giving **vein** today. (Richard III, 4,2)
vile	hateful	'Tis a **vile** thing to die, my gracious lord, (*Richard III*, 3.2)
visage	face or countenance	O, how mine eyes do loathe his **visage** now! (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 4.1)
want	lack	Only, we **want** a little personal strength; (*Henry IV Part 2*, 4.4)
warrant	promise	I **warrant** thee. Meet me by and by at the citadel: (*Othello*, 2.1)
whence	where	To a cruel war I sent him; from **whence** he returned, (*Corialanus*, 1.3)
wherefore	why	O Romeo, Romeo! **wherefore** art thou Romeo? (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2)
withal	with, with it; wholly; notwithstanding	You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part **withal** (*Hamlet*, 2.2)
would	wish	I **would** my father look'd but with my eyes. (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1.1)
yonder	over there	Look, where thy love comes; **yonder** is thy dear. (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.2)

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

Common Shakespeare Usage
Special Categories

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

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, (*Coriolanus*, 5.6)
Doth	Does	**Doth** Lear walk thus? (*King Lear,* 1.3)
Contractions and Omissions		
'tis	It is	**'Tis** certain so; (*Much Ado About Nothing*; 1.1)
'twas	It was	Patience, I pray you; **'twas** a fault unwilling. (*The Taming of the Shrew,* 4.1)
Ope	Open	Thy crystal window **ope**; (*Cymbeline*, 5.4)
O'er	Over	Returning were as tedious as go **o'er**: (*Macbeth*, 3.4)
Ne'er	Never	and creep time **ne'er** so slow, (*King John*, 3.3)
I'	In	Go to, **i'** faith (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 1.1)
O'	On	A plague **o'** both your houses! (*Romeo and Juliet*, 3.1)
e'er	Ever	This is the first truth that **e'er** thine own tongue was guilty of. (*All's Well That Ends Well*, 4.1)
Oft	Often	I **oft** found both: (*The Merchant of Venice*, 1.1)
a	he	Well, let his father be what **a'** will, we talk of young Master Launcelot. (*Merchant of Venice*, 2.2)

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