

English binomials II: synonymous and antonymous pairs

Binomials are collocated pairs of words (for example, *odds and ends*), be they nouns, verbs, adverbs or adjectives, usually linked by a conjunction (most often *and*)

Here we focus on pairs with closely related meanings (*peace and quiet*), and those with near opposite meanings (*open-and-shut*)

All I want is a little **peace and** _____
tranquillity and freedom from disturbance

Keeping the house **neat and** _____ is widely considered a virtue.
clean and organized

'I'm **sick and** ____ of having to repeat myself,' the teacher said irately to the class.
thoroughly fatigued or bored, fed up

Orwell's **Down and** _____ *in Paris and London* (1933) is a two-part memoir of experiences of poverty in Paris and vagrancy in London.
destitute, impoverished

I've fought **tooth and** _____ to climb this far up the greasy pole and I'm not going to let go lightly.
with every available means, all out

Instead of simply denying our request, the mayor's representative gave us a **song and** _____ about legal issues and municipal liability

No need to make a **song and** _____ about it!

long statement or explanation usually not true or pertinent; fuss or commotion

All I want is a little **peace and quiet**.
tranquillity and freedom from disturbance

Keeping the house **neat and tidy** is widely considered a virtue.
clean and organized

'I'm **sick and tired** of having to repeat myself,' the teacher said irately to the class.
thoroughly fatigued or bored, fed up

Orwell's **Down and out** in Paris and London (1933) is a two-part memoir of experiences of poverty in Paris and vagrancy in London.
destitute, impoverished

I've fought **tooth and nail** to climb this far up the greasy pole and I'm not going to let go lightly.
with every available means, all out

Instead of simply denying our request, the mayor's representative gave us a **song and dance** about legal issues and municipal liability
No need to make a **song and dance** about it!
long statement or explanation usually not true or pertinent; fuss or commotion

I hear you **loud and** _____.

in a way that reduces or avoids confusion or misunderstanding

Ow! I've got **pins and** _____ down my arm.

She was on **pins and** _____ waiting for her exam results.

a pricking tingling sensation in a limb growing numb; a nervous or jumpy state of anticipation

Not only is no one predestined to return to a life of crime, but these new strategies are helping keep them on the **straight and** _____.

the way of propriety and rectitude

We searched **far and** _____ for a suitable candidate but with no joy.

everywhere, all over

He expects his employees to be at his **beck and** _____ day and night.

always ready to do whatever someone asks

beck n. (literary) gesture requesting attention, such as a nod or wave.
(The verb *beckon* is in everyday use.)

I hear you **loud and clear**.

in a way that reduces or avoids confusion or misunderstanding

Ow! I've got **pins and needles** down my arm.

She was on **pins and needles** waiting for her exam results.

a pricking tingling sensation in a limb growing numb or recovering from numbness; a nervous or jumpy state of anticipation

Not only is no one predestined to return to a life of crime, but these new strategies are helping keep them on the **straight and narrow**.

the way of propriety and rectitude

We searched **far and wide** for a suitable candidate but with no joy.

everywhere, all over

He expects his employees to be at his **beck and call** day and night.

always ready to do whatever someone asks

beck n. (literary) gesture requesting attention, such as a nod or wave.
(The verb *beckon* is in everyday use.)

The announcement was long on strategy and short on the **nuts and** ____ of how the forums will work in practice.

basic practical details

Today it seems is all about fake news and playing **fast and** ____ with the facts.

behave irresponsibly or immorally, treat lightly

He's come on by **leaps and** ____ this semester.

with startlingly rapid progress

public disclosure of the terms of the out-of-court settlement renders it **null and** ____.

having no force, binding power, or validity

If you can live without the latest **bells and** ____, then used equipment may be for you.

attractive but not essential additional features, trimmings, frills

You takes your choices; it's **swings and** _____ anyway.

said of a situation in which different actions or options result in no eventual gain or loss: it does not matter which in the end

The announcement was long on strategy and short on the **nuts and bolts** of how the forums will work in practice.

basic practical details

Today it seems is all about fake news and playing **fast and loose** with the facts.

behave irresponsibly or immorally, treat lightly

He's come on by **leaps and bounds** this semester.

with startlingly rapid progress

public disclosure of the terms of the out-of-court settlement renders it **null and void**

having no force, binding power, or validity

If you can live without the latest **bells and whistles**, then used equipment may be for you.

attractive but not essential additional features, trimmings, frills

You takes your choices; it's **swings and roundabouts** anyway.

said of a situation in which different actions or options result in no eventual gain or loss: it does not matter which in the end

The truth is not always **black-and-_____**
involving clearly defined opposing principles or issues, sharply defined, clear-cut

Neither side in this argument has an **open-and-_____** case.
(of a case or argument) admitting no doubt or dispute

He's down the pub every day, come **rain or _____**
Come **rain or _____**, I'll see you next week.
whatever the weather; no matter what happens

Life has its **ups and _____** and the sooner you get to know
that the better
alternating rise and fall especially in fortune, vicissitudes

He'll get you up to speed tomorrow and explain all the **ins
and _____** of the matter.
characteristic peculiarities or technicalities; ramifications

The truth is not always **black-and-white**
involving clearly defined opposing principles or issues, sharply defined, clear-cut

Neither side in this argument has an **open-and-shut** case.
(of a case or argument) admitting no doubt or dispute

He's down the pub every day, come **rain or shine**
Come **rain or shine**, I'll see you next week.
whatever the weather; no matter what happens

Life has its **ups and downs** and the sooner you get to know
that the better
alternating rise and fall especially in fortune, vicissitudes

He'll get you up to speed tomorrow and explain all the **ins
and outs** of the matter.
characteristic peculiarities or technicalities; ramifications

Congress weighed the **pros and** _____ of the new tax plan.
arguments for and against; good points and bad points

By and _____, the information they give is accurate, although perhaps they are being economical with the truth
on the whole; everything considered

From sailing: “alternately close-hauled (*by*) and not close-hauled (_____)” [close-hauled = into the wind]

Either outcome would mean a change of leadership for Spain and would send the country **sooner or** _____ to new elections.

at some uncertain but inevitable future time

For centuries now, the growth of economies has been tightly coupled with rising energy demand and rising greenhouse gas emissions — a one-to-one correlation, **more or** _____.

to a varying or undetermined extent or degree; approximately

Congress weighed the **pros and cons** of the new tax plan.
arguments for and against; good points and bad points

By and large, the information they give is accurate, although perhaps they are being economical with the truth
on the whole; everything considered

From sailing: “alternately close-hauled (*by*) and not close-hauled (*large*)” [close-hauled = into the wind]

Either outcome would mean a change of leadership for Spain and would send the country **sooner or later** to new elections.

at some uncertain but inevitable future time

For centuries now, the growth of economies has been tightly coupled with rising energy demand and rising greenhouse gas emissions — a one-to-one correlation, **more or less**.

to a varying or undetermined extent or degree; approximately

He departed this vale a decade or so ago, **give or** ____ a couple of years.

That's the plot, **give or** ____ a few details.

to within a specified amount; apart from

Now and ____ I stop to think what it is that I'm doing here.

from time to time, occasionally

I could give you a lot of reasons for my decision, but the **long and** ____ of it is that I just don't want to go.

to be brief, to give the most important parts of/ reasons for

Of course the real causes of the Civil War are much more complex and the real attitudes of the two regions towards slavery and equality aren't as **cut and** ____ as people would like to believe

(often with a negative) completely settled

Not all economists think this decade will be a time of **milk and**

____.
prosperity and abundance

He departed this vale a decade or so ago, **give or take** a couple of years.

That's the plot, **give or take** a few details.

to within a specified amount; apart from

Now and then I stop to think what it is that I'm doing here.

from time to time, occasionally

I could give you a lot of reasons for my decision, but the **long and short** of it is that I just don't want to go.

to be brief, to give the most important parts of/ reasons for

Of course the real causes of the Civil War are much more complex and the real attitudes of the two regions towards slavery and equality aren't as **cut and dried** as people would like to believe

(often with a negative) completely settled

Not all economists think this decade will be a time of **milk and honey**.

prosperity and abundance

um and ah
peace and quiet
neat and tidy
checks and balances
cloak and dagger
heart and soul
song and dance
sick and tired
milk and honey
down and out
short and/but sweet
quick and dirty
tooth and nail
hand to mouth
flesh and blood
skin and bones
bells and whistles
intents and purposes
law and order
ifs and buts
...

...
pure and simple
leaps and bounds
nuts and bolts
fast and loose
loud and clear
pins and needles
arm and a leg
straight and narrow
nip and tuck
bits and pieces
odds and ends
far and wide
beck and call
show and tell
fire and brimstone
blood and guts
rise and shine
swings and roundabouts

black-and-white
open-and-shut
long and short
rain or shine
highs and lows
ups and downs
ins and outs
pros and cons
by and large
sooner or later
more or less
give or take
take it or leave it
salt-and-pepper
life and death
now and then
back and forth
ebb and flow
all or nothing
lost and found
far and wide