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honest, *adj.* and *adv.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /'ɒnɪst/, U.S. /'ɑnəst/

Forms: ME **oneste**, ME–15 **honeste**, ME–16 **honest**, ME–16 **onest**, ME–**honest**, 15–16 **honist**.

Frequency (in current use):

Origin: A borrowing from French. **Etymon:** French *honest*.

Etyymology: < Anglo-Norman *honest*, *onest*, Anglo-Norman and Middle French *honeste*, *honeste* (French *honnête*) honourable, virtuous, just, frank, commendable, appropriate, suitable, excellent, fine, estimable, conforming to the rules of polite society (from 11th cent. in Old French), courteous, civil, decent, respectable, (of a w *honestus* regarded with honour or respect, honourable, of high rank, worthy of respect, decent, fine, handsome < *honōs*, *honor* HON

Cross Reference

honour | honor, n.

Great respect, esteem, or reverence received, gained, or enjoyed by a person or thing; glory, renown, fame; reputation, good name.
Opposed to *dishonour* or *disgrace*.

badge, *Medal of Honour*, etc.: see the first element.

Compare Catalan *honest* (14th cent.), Spanish *honesto* (13th cent.), Portuguese *honesto* (13th cent.), Italian *onesto* (13th cent.).

In later use in French (from at least the late 17th cent.) also in uses indicating a more qualified evaluation of things or actions, 'acceptable', 'middling'. In use conforming to expected norms, urbane, showing good manners or social polish' (compare HONNÊTE HOMME *n.*).

A. *adj.*

1. Of a thing, condition, action, etc.

†a. Of a feast: magnificent, sumptuous; stately, splendid. Also (of food): fine, delicious. *Obs.*

c1330 (P?a1300) *Arthur & Merlin* (Auch.) (1973) l. 4072 Fourten niȝt Arthur held fest Swiȝe noble and swiȝe onest.

c1390 *Pistel of Swete Susan* (Vernon) l. 94 (MED) Þe fyge and þe filbert were fode med so fayre..Apples and Almaundus þat honest are of ayre.

a1500 (P?a1400) T. CHESTRE *Sir Launfal* (1930) l. 632 (MED) Fourty dayes leste þe feste, Ryche, ryall, and honeste.

†b. Worthy of honour, honourable, commendable; (also) that confers honour, that does a person credit. *Obs.*

1340 *Ayenbite* (1866) 222 Þet stat of spoushod is zuo holy and suo honeste.

c1405 (C1395) CHAUCER *Merchant's Tale* (Hengwrt) (2003) l. 780 In honeste wise as longeth to a knyght.

1477 EARL RIVERS tr. *Dictes or Sayengis Philosophhres* (Caxton) (1877) lf. 1^v Alle vertuose and honest thynges.

1509 *Kynge Rycharde Cuer du Lyon* (de Worde) sig. E.vi Crystmasse is a tyme full honeste Kynge Rycharde it honoured with grete faste.

1533 J. BELLENDEN tr. *Livy Hist. Rome* II. 153 There wes na batall mair honest, than this last rehersit.

1548 *Hall's Vnion: Edward IV* f. ccxxij^v Kyng Henry..founded a solempe schoole at Eton..an honest Colege of sad Priestes, with a greate nombre of children.

1621 R. BURTON *Anat. Melancholy* I. l. II. xi. 43 That respects onely things delectable and pleasant, this **Honest**.

1657 O. CROMWELL *Speech 8 May in Writings & Speeches* (1947) IV. 513 The things are very honourable and honest, and the product worthy of a Parliament.

1700 DRYDEN tr. *Ovid Speeches Ajax & Ulysses in Fables* 467 Many a manly Wound: All honest, all before.

1716 POPE tr. *Homer Iliad* II. v. 312 Know, 'tis not honest in my Soul to fear, Nor was Tydides born to tremble here.

1771 'JUNIUS' *Stat Nominis Umbra* (1772) II. lxi. 287 An honest zeal in behalf of innocence oppressed by quibble and chicanery.

c. Not deserving of disgrace or reproach; respectable, decent; (also) seemly, befitting. Now *rare*.

1340 *Ayenbite* (1866) 229 Loke þe uram uoule wordes þet ne byeþ naȝt honeste.

?a1425 (P?c1350) *Northern Passion* (Rawl.) l. 2276 To plant þa wandes in honest place, ffor to be keped honestly, And wirschiped als þai war worthi.

a1500 (P?a1450) *Gesta Romanorum* (BL Add. 9066) 60 It were more honest that I shuld have such a wyf, and my felaw to have suche a wyf as I have.

1514 in J. RAINE *Testamenta Eboracensia* (1884) V. 52 I will that, the day of my buryall, she maik an honest dynner to my frendes and neyours.

1555 in A. G. DICKENS *Marian Reaction in Diocese York: Laity* (1957) ii. 16 She may contynue & remayne in any honest place withoute the saide house of Mousby.

1633 EARL OF MANCHESTER *Al Mondo: Contemplatio Mortis* (rev. ed.) 35 Honest sepulture is a blessing.

1654 J. PLAYFORD *Breefe Introd. Skill Musick* 20 Corantos, Sarabands and Jigs, used for honest mirth and delight in Feasts.

a1662 T. CRAUFURD *Hist. Univ. Edinb.* (1808) 77 In bestowing upon the Colledge an honest residence for the Muses.

1766 O. GOLDSMITH *Vicar of Wakefield* II. ii. 44 To come and take up an honest house, without cross or coin to bless yourself with.

1797 A. M. BENNETT *Beggar Girl* I. ii. 34 Letting a tribe of shabroons and painted jezebels into their honest house.

1807 *Athenæum* 1 Sept. 244 He had an honest burial, with a funeral sermon, and other circumstances becoming one of his rank and reputation.

1870 I. N. HARWOOD *Heir Expectant* ii. 37 Your presence..would be contamination in any honest dwelling.

1882 *Rev. E. P. Rogers* 27 To aspire to merit for ourselves, each in his turn, an honest commemoration.

1997 W. BEIK *Urban Protest in 17th-cent. France* vi. 121 Perhaps the use of the cemetery indicated that the victims..deserved an honest burial.

†d. With reference to appearance: presentable, decent, respectable; neat, tidy; without blemish. *Obs.*

†c1384 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) (Douce 369(2)) (1850) 1 Cor. xii. 24 Tho membris that ben vn honest, han more honeste. Forsoth oure honest [a1425 *L.V.* oneste; *L. honesta*] membris of noon han nede.

a1400 (P?a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Trin. Cambr.) l. 6067 A clene lomb þat is honest.

1483 *Mirk's Festial* (Caxton) sig. cvii Men wold make hem that day shere hem and pollen her heedes and..so make hem honeste ageyn ester day.

a1500 (1422) J. YONGE tr. *Secreta Secret.* (Rawl.) (1898) 240 (MED) Fayre thyng and honeste clothyng kydely delytyth manes herte.

c1540 (P?a1400) *Gest Historiale Destr. Troy* (2002) f. 28 Toures full tore torret aboute..Made all of marbyll..With ymagry full honest openly wrought.

?1566 J. ALDAY tr. P. Boastuau *Theatrum Mundi* sig. R. iijij He hath created the chin..after so honest a forme, and hath enriched it with a bearde.

2.

a. Of a person: (originally) †holding a position of honour; distinguished, noble (*obs.*); (hence) held in good esteem; respectable, reputable. Now *rare*.

In later use passing into sense A. 4b.

†a1382 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) (Douce 369(1)) (1850) Eccus. xiii. 2 Berthen vp on hym he taketh, that comuneth to the honestere [a1425 *L.V.* a more onest man; *L. honestior*] than hymself.

c1390 (c1300) *MS Vernon Homilies in Archiv f. das Studium der Neueren Sprachen* (1877) 57 256 A wydewe..com þis Condulmasse feste, And heo wolde han, as wyf honeste, Hire Masse.

- c1400 (†?a1300) *Kyng Alisaunder* (Laud) l. 158 (MED) Olymphas..Wolde make a riche fest Of kniȝtes and lefdyes honest.
 a1425 (†c1395) *Bible* (Wycliffite, L.V.) (Royal) (1850) *Ecclus.* xi. 23 It is esy in the iȝen of God, sudeynli to make onest [E.V. to honesten; L. *honestare*] a pore man.
 c1540 (†?a1400) *Gest Historiale Destr. Troy* (2002) f. 25 A woman..Onest & abill & Ecuba she hight.
 1548 *Hall's Vnion: Henry VIII* f. xlvj^v The honest and sustanciall persons arrested or indited.
 1624 J. SMITH *Gen. Hist. Virginia* iv. 111 Houses, wherein liue the honestest sort of people, as Farmers in England.
 1687 A. LOVELL tr. J. de Thévenot *Trav. into Levant* iii. 57 He told me That that Country is pleasant enough, and full of good honest People.
 1692 *London Gaz.* No. 2735/4 The Purchaser to take 2 honest Men, and the Seller 2 more, for all such Goods.
 1709 R. STEELE *Tatler* No. 112. ¶5 Young Gentlemen, descended of honest Parents.
 1796 A. DIROM *Inq. into Corn Laws & Corn Trade Great Brit.* ii. 69 Honest and substantial persons.., being neither merchants nor factors for the importing of corn.
 1828 *Casket* May 201/2 All I desire is, that my son-in-law should be a man of probity, and descended from an honest family.
 1854 J. E. COOKE *Leather Stocking & Silk* xxxii. 135 It is neither graceful or becoming for one so well descended as yourself, to thus trifle with the traditions of an honest family.
 1995 A. THOMAS *Labyrinth of Word* vii. 107 Ludvik encounters..an apparently respectable *bourgeois* posing as a dandy. It turns out that Karel is from honest farming stock in Bohemia.

b. As a general epithet of appreciation or praise for a person, esp. as used in a patronizing way to or of an inferior. Frequently as a form of address, often with *my*. Cf. *GOOD* *adj.* 4c. Now somewhat *rare*.

- 1551 T. WILSON *Rule of Reason* sig. Uij Suche a one is a very honest man, For I had good cheare at his house.
 1583 C. HOLLYBAND *Campo di Fior* 309 Honest man, is this the way to Bolonia?
 1600 SHAKESPEARE *Midsummer Night's Dream* iii. i. 176 Your name honest gentleman?
 1681 DRYDEN *Absalom & Achitophel* 16 These were for laying Honest David by, On Principles of pure good Husbandry.
 1709 R. STEELE *Tatler* No. 45 Let Mr. Bickerstaff alone (says one of the Honest Fellows), when he's in a good Humour, he's as good Company as any Man in England.
 1720 W. CONGREVE *Impossible Thing* 16 The Clown..louder cry'd, Ho! honest Friend.
 1755 T. SMOLLETT tr. Cervantes *Don Quixote* II. iv. xiv. 425 Truce with your compliments and skink away, honest Tosilos.
 1846 W. E. BROCKETT *J. T. Brockett's Gloss. North Country Words* (ed. 3) I. (at cited word) A Northern baronet..chairman of quarter sessions, was accustomed, when he sentenced a prisoner, to begin, 'Now, my honest man, you have been convicted of felony'.
 1855 W. COLLINS in *Househ. Words* 31 356/2 His amiable sister—who is not to be passed over because you don't mention her, my honest man!—lives within ten minutes' walk of my house.
 1889 R. CLYNTON *Life Celebrated Buccaneer* xxxvii. 229 Take care, my honest fellow, that designing people neither make a tool nor a fool of you.
 1916 P. G. WODEHOUSE *Piccadilly Jim* xiv. 218 When he appears, I will say 'Ah, Skinner! Honest fellow!' or words to that effect.
 1997 J. R. RUSSELL tr. J. Kuhnau *Musical Charlatan* xv. 41 Caraffa..causes our *musici* to..trade their sensible human voices for the voice of a senseless beast. What's to be done for these honest gentlemen?

3-

†**a.** Of a person or society: of good moral character; virtuous, upright. *Obs.*

- †a1393 GOWER *Confessio Amantis* (Fairf.) vii. l. 1516 So scholde he be the more honeste To whom god yaf so gret a yifte.
 †a1393 GOWER *Confessio Amantis* (Fairf.) i. l. 2024 A King Wys and honeste in alle thing.
 c1400 (†?c1380) *Cleanness* (1920) l. 18 He is so clene in his corte, þe Kyng þat al weldez, And honeste in his housholde.
 1535 *Bible* (Coverdale) 1 Kings i. 52 Yf he wil be an honest man, there shall not one heer fall from him vpon the earth.
 1585 T. WASHINGTON tr. N. de Nicolay *Nauigations Turkie* i. xxii. 28 Beyng a good Pilot and a very honest man.
 1613 S. PURCHAS *Pilgrimage* 393 For the credit of this honest and loyall..societe.
 1673 W. CAVE *Primitive Christianity* i. i. 10 The honestest and severer Romans were ashamed on 't.
 1702 N. ROWE *Tamerlane* Ded. It were to be wish'd..that the World were honest to such a degree, and that there were not that scandalous defect of common morality.

b. Esp. of a woman: virtuous as regards sexual morality, chaste; virginal. *arch.* and *rare* after early 18th cent.

- a1400 *Cato's Distichs* (Fairf.) l. 57 in R. Morris *Cursor Mundi* (1878) III. App. iv. 1670 Fle to take wife..bot ho be honest..ne halde hir for na druri. if ho be vnchest.
 1428 in F. J. Furnivall *Fifty Earliest Eng. Wills* (1882) 79 The mariage of onest and poure maidens.
 1535 *Bible* (Coverdale) 2 Esdras xvi. 49 Like as an whore enuyeth an honest woman.
 a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1623) iv. ii. 95 Wiues may be merry, and yet honest too.
 1669 T. SHADWELL *Royal Shepherdess* i. i. 12 You marry'd me to keep me honest, did you?
 1711 R. STEELE *Spectator* No. 118. ¶2 The Maid is honest, and the Man dares not be otherwise.
 1899 *Harper's New Monthly Mag.* Oct. 797/2 An Alsacian spy..seduced an honest girl, and then..shot her, and kidnapped her child.
 2002 *Ethnologia Europaea* 32 23/2 Although a seduced girl had her honour restored by the award of satisfaction..a woman could not regain the..reputation she had enjoyed as an honest maid.

4-

a. Of an action, feeling, etc.: done with or expressive of truthfulness, fairness, or integrity of character or intention; free from deceit; genuine, sincere. Also: done with good intentions even if unsuccessful or misguided.

- a1400 (†a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) l. 22914 Sant gregor gaf ansuer honest.
 c1400 (†?a1300) *Kyng Alisaunder* (Laud) l. 4008 He ne dude no tresoun. His dede ne was bot honest, For he dude his lordes hest.
 1508 W. DUNBAR *Goldyn Targe* (Chepman & Myllar) in *Poems* (1998) l. 189 Leuefull Company and Honest Besynes.
 1569 R. GRAFTON *Chron.* II. 382 Their honest and reasonable excuses could not be heard.
 1617 F. MORYSON *Itinerary* II. 268 A quiet harvest that might arise out of their own honest labour.
 1658 J. BRAMHALL *Consecration Protestant Bishops Justified* x. 218 It is none of the honestest Pleas, *Negare factum*, to deny such publick Acts as these.
 a1695 J. SCOTT *Pract. Disc.* (1697) I. xi. 464 For a Man to..mask his real Intentions with contrary Appearances, is a very uneasie Way of living; for there is twice the Difficulty in every Thing that he aims and drives at, as there is in an honest and above-board, Procedure.
 a1732 J. GAY *Fables* (1738) II. vi. 48 Unbrib'd, unaw'd, he dares impart The honest dictates of his heart.
 1790 F. BURNEY *Diary* July (1842) V. 145 He came..with an honest, straightforward security of the welcome he really found.
 1848 THACKERAY *Vanity Fair* lii. 465 The very best and honestest feelings of the man came out in these artless outpourings of paternal feeling.
 1883 *Law Times* 20 Oct. 408/1 The object of a bankruptcy law..should be the economical and honest distribution of a bankrupt's estate.
 1919 H. S. WALPOLE *Secret City* III. xv. 435 No young man likes to be discovered hidden behind a coat-rack, however honest his original intentions!

- 1942 'H. H. HOLMES' *Rocket to Morgue* 51 They frequently made honest attempts at forecasting scientific developments.
 1984 D. IVERSON & R. GRANT *Team Ministry* v. vi. 67 They sent the money to my home, and through an honest mistake..it was inadvertently placed in my personal bank account.
 2001 R. DAWKINS in *Devil's Chaplain* (2003) iv. 179 To be fair, many pushers of dishonest remedies are motivated by an honest desire to help.

b. Of a person: that acts fairly and with integrity; that is not disposed to lie, cheat, or steal; truthful; trustworthy; sincere.

- c1540 (r?A1400) *Gest Historiale Destr. Troy* (2002) f. 2^v Ovyd and othir þat onest were ay..Thes dampnet his dedys.
 1581 G. PETTIE tr. S. Guazzo *Ciulle Conuersat.* i. 42 He, which plainly telleth the truth, sheweth himself to be an honest man.
 a1600 *Doctrynnall Good Seruauntes* in E. F. Rimbault *Anc. Poet. Tracts 16th Cent.* (1842) 8 Ye seruauntes..Be ye honest and dylygent.
 1674 D. BREVINT *Saul & Samuel* 282 The honestest Monks we know are sometimes tempted to say strange things.
 1734 POPE *Ess. Man: Epist. IV* 238 An honest man's the noblest Work of God.
 1751 JOHNSON *Rambler* No. 189. ¶12 She..was at last convinced that she had been flattered, and that her glass was honest than her maid.
 1791 'G. GAMBADO' *Ann. Horsemanship* iv. 18 A Dealer in Moorfields (who..is no honest than he ought to be).
 1849 MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* II. vii. 177 Though often misled by prejudice and passion, he was emphatically an honest man.
 1897 W. RALEIGH *Style* 125 The pillory and the stocks are hardly educational agents, but they make it easier for honest men to enjoy their own.
 1907 M. A. VON ARNIM *Fräulein Schmidt* xiv. 55 I tell you I am incurably honest. I cannot bear to lie.
 1956 G. METALIOUS *Peyton Place* III. viii. 324 Lucas was always the crooked one in that family. Nellie..was honest as the day is long.
 1971 S. HOWATCH *Penmarric* (1972) iv. i. 370 She was a good, decent, honest person whom my father had dragged through the mud.
 2011 *New Yorker* 11 July 38/1 And the culture of evasion has negative consequences... It means that the revenue burden falls too heavily on honest taxpayers.

c. attrib. Of money, gain, etc.: acquired without cheating or stealing; legitimate; legally or fairly earned, esp. through hard work.

- 1559 W. BAVAND tr. J. Ferrarius *Common Weale* IX. f. 198^v The vsurer of honest gaine.
 1628 G. WITHER *Britain's Remembrancer* III. f. 89^v An honest wealth have won thee..whereby they sought to have undone thee.
 1647 S. BIRCKBEK *Cordiall for Heart-qualme* II. 56 Honest earnings shall furnish our Table with all.
 1709 J. ADDISON *Tatler* No. 131. ¶10 To..take to some honest Livelihood without Loss of Time.
 1782 'J. H. ST. J. DE CRÈVECEUR' *Lett. from Amer. Farmer* iv. 147 Each seeks in the prosecution of his lawful business that honest gain which supports them.
 1825 L. L. CAMERON *Houlston Tracts* I. 10 (title) An honest penny is worth a silver shilling.
 1881 *Burlington (Iowa) Daily Hawk-eye* 20 Mar. To engage in sawing wood,..or anything else that would gain for them an honest living.
 1904 *Reader* June 5/1 Presidio..had enough skill in several occupations to earn honest wages, but seemed unable to forego the pleasure of exercising his wit in confidence games and sneak-thievery.
 1950 J. LAIT & L. MORTIMER *Chicago Confidential* II. xxiv. 210 His honest millions were not enough to take her away from..her underworld associations.
 2005 *Nelson (N.Z.) Mail* (Nexis) 18 June (Features section) 16 He earns an honest living as a Takaka bone carver.

d. Free from guile or dissimulation; ingenuous, innocent; candid, straightforward; (in later use esp. of the face) genuinely reflecting a person's character, open, frank.

In later use of people, often merging with sense A. 4b.

- 1634 J. FORD *Chron. Hist. Perkin Warbeck* II. sig. C4 Blesse the young man, our Nation would be laughd at For honest soules through Christendome.
 1680 T. OTWAY *Orphan* II. 20 I am a doating honest Slave.
 1701 N. ROWE *Ambitious Step-mother* I. i. 171 Dull heavy things! Whom Nature has left honest In meer frugality.
 1778 *Ann. Reg. 1777* Characters 43/1 A short thick-set man, with a very honest ingenuous countenance.
 1849 MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* I. iv. 437 The honest monk was so illiterate that he did not know what he ought to say on an occasion of such importance.
 1866 W. D. HOWELLS *Venetian Life* II. 23 He beheld the honest swindling countenance of a hotel portier.
 1927 *Boys' Life* Jan. 29/1 He was..a big strapping fellow with clear eyes, and an eager, honest face.
 1983 H. BLAMIRE *Guide 20th Cent. Lit. in Eng.* 43 The honest ingenuous comic who puts his foot in it and is trapped into matrimony by a glamorous journalist.
 2005 A. SABOL *Elem., my Dear* 37 A delighted smile spread over his honest features.

e. In predicative use. Truthful or candid in regard to a particular matter; disposed to admit the truth of something (frequently something unpalatable). Earliest in *to be honest* at Phrases 2.

- 1743 H. FIELDING *Journey from this World* I. 19 in *Misc.* II. 153 A very poor and numerous Family, which, to be honest with you, procured its Livelihood by Begging.
 1772 P. H. TREYSSAC DE VERGY *Lovers* II. xl. 210 You have been very plain with Lady B— L—; be as honest with me.
 1796 S. H. BURNEY *Clarentine* III. xviii. 32 I thought it best to be honest with him at once, and therefore answered very calmly.
 1846 *Evergreen* Apr. 126/1 The reader will remember that a man always speaks of his own efforts as 'humble', when he entertains a high opinion of them. We may as well be honest about it.
 1865 *Bible Christian Mag.* May 204 Uncle Peter, come now, be honest about the matter; are you a converted man?
 1914 R. BLUNT *In Cheyne Walk & Thereabout* iv. 138 Our own doctor, if he dare be honest, will tell us how often he prescribes some merely innocuous mixture.
 1928 P. GRAINGER *Let.* 31 Jan. in *All-round Man* (1994) 88 You blame yrself for not being honest with me last summer.
 1995 *Independent on Sunday* 27 Aug. (Real Lives Suppl.) 11/1 If we are honest, we know we're buying a dream.
 2004 *Times Lit. Suppl.* 27 Aug. 10/4 She is balanced and honest about treatments, acknowledging that there is no cure.

5. attrib. Of a thing: not appearing to be or presented as other than it actually is; genuine, unadulterated; (later chiefly) unsophisticated, unpretentious.

- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1623) IV. ii. 111 Behold what honest clothes you send forth to bleaching.
 1674 tr. P. M. de la Martinière *New Voy. Northern Countries* 31 We were glad to betake ourselves to the provisions we had brought..which was honest Bisket and salt Beef.
 1713 J. ADDISON *Tryal Count Tariff* 3 Every thing he wore was substantial honest, home-spun Ware.
 1785 W. COWPER *Task* III. 805 He may wrap himself in honest rags At his last gasp.
 1812 G. CRABBE *Tales* xiv. 253 His Conscience never checks him when he swears The fat he sells is honest fat of bears.
 1884 F. J. CHILD *Eng. & Sc. Pop. Ballads* I. II. xxxvii. 322/2 Bringing some honest bread and wine with her.
 1935 *Rotarian* Mar. 55/2 Showy pretense must be avoided, such as concrete blocks masquerading as honest stone.
 a1951 H. C. BOSMAN in L. Abrahams *Unto Dust* (1963) 135 I could sit on my stoep and fill my pipe with honest Magaliesberg tobacco.

- 1994 *Best* 2 June 25/5 They know they'll get honest food cooked to as near perfection as I can.
 2007 *Metro* (Toronto) 14 Feb. 26/2 A flawless balance of credible, non-pretentious, honest music.

B. adv.

1. In an honest manner; by honest means; honestly. In later use *regional* and *nonstandard*. Now chiefly *U.S.*

- 1654 E. GAYTON *Pleasant Notes Don Quixot* iv. i. 176 And why slay him, if that he honest meant?
 1671 F. PHILIPPS *Regale Necessarium* 330 Wares and Commodities, honester made.
 ?1790 *Busy Bee* II. 144 And ven I can't sheat, I'sh deal honest, Ish swear.
 1810 *Trial between W. Leworthy & Globe Insurance Co.* 48 He always behaved very honest to me.
 1898 *Smith Coll. Monthly* Apr. 323 I came by my money honest and I've worked hard.
 1902 *Emporia* (Kansas) *Weekly Gaz.* 27 Feb. The boys acted honest about the matter and really won the sympathy of the policemen.
 1979 *Foxfire* 5 31 You better get it [sc. money] honest. If you're a card player, get it that way.
 2011 H. DIMON *Victoria's got Secret* viii. 65 He worked honest and hard.

2. *colloq.* (orig. *U.S.*). Used to emphasize, or persuade a person of the truth of, a statement. Cf. **HONESTLY** *adv.* 4a.

- 1876 'M. TWAIN' *Adventures Tom Sawyer* ix. 91 Tell me, Joe,—*honest*, now, old feller—did I do it?
 1901 S. MERWIN & H. K. WEBSTER *Calumet 'K'* viii. 160 Honest, Hilda, I don't see how he does it.
 1928 F. B. YOUNG *My Brother Jonathan* II. iv If it weren't for the life at Prince's I don't think I could stick it..*honest!*
 1972 'J. BONETT' & 'E. BONETT' *No Time to Kill* viii. 103 Of course I don't know a thing, but, honest, I can't see anyone here doing these people in.
 2007 J. LEEDS *Taproom Tales* x. 184 I know nothing about it, honest Guv.

PHRASES

P1. to make (a woman) an honest woman, to make an honest woman of (a woman): to marry (a woman) with whom one has had sexual relations, or who is otherwise not considered to be respectable in terms of accepted standards of sexual morality; (later *humorously* without connotations of restoring respectability) to marry (a woman). Later occasionally also used of a man.

- 1562 in D. H. FLEMING *Reg. Christian Congregation St. Andrews* (1889) I. 145 Sche refused otherways to consent, except he wald mak hyr ane honest woman.
 1629 J. EARLE *Micro-cosmogr.* (ed. 5) xiv. sig. D8 The best worke he does is his marrying, for it makes an honest woman.
 1664 J. WILSON *Cheats* III. iii. 38 Some or other should marrie her up, and make an honest woman of her.
 1749 H. FIELDING *Tom Jones* V. xv. viii. 260 Miss Nancy was, in vulgar Language, soon made an honest Woman.
 1766 O. GOLDSMITH *Vicar of Wakefield* II. xii. 211 She was now made an honest woman of.
 1818 SCOTT *Heart of Mid-Lothian* ix, in *Tales of my Landlord* 2nd Ser. IV. 201 Effie was married—made, according to the common phrase, an honest woman.
 1887 M. E. BRADDON *Like & Unlike* III. v. 64 I wish he had been free to make your sister an honest woman.
 1920 D. GOLDRING *Fight for Freedom* III. 51 She will never consent to be made an honest woman of—just like a housemaid who has got into trouble.
 1968 R. HARRIS *Nice Girl's Story* v. 38 When are you going to be made an honest woman?
 1990 J. DEVERAUX *Mountain Laurel* xiv. 248 I guess you'll make an honest man out of me, won't you? You weren't taking advantage of me in the last few days?
 2002 G. HINTON *Desperate Hearts* xi. 115 'Sam and I were married last year.' Gloria..smiled. 'Well I'm glad he made an honest woman of you.'

P2. to be honest: used as sentence adverbial to convey one's willingness to be candid or truthful: speaking frankly. In recent use frequently as an emphaticizer. Frequently with modifying adverb as **to be quite honest, to be perfectly honest**, etc.

- 1743 [see sense A. 4c].
 1750 L. BRIANT *Friendly Rem. Sermon in Let.* 25 And then again (to be honest with you) I confess I have not sometimes been without my Doubts whether or no the Language in which Calvin wrote might not a little startle you.
 1785 W. HUTTON *Bran New Wark* 6 Inkhorn words, to be honest, we know lile about.
 1853 DICKENS *Bleak House* li. 488 Sir, .to be honest with you (honesty being my golden rule, whether I gain by it or lose, and I find that I generally lose), money is the word.
 1874 *Harper's Mag.* Nov. 852/1 Besides, to be quite honest, I was afraid the marchese, who was as lithe and agile as a tiger, would be more likely to kill Sebastiano.
 1894 H. R. CHAMBERLAIN *6000 Tons of Gold* xiii. 286 To be absolutely honest, I cannot plead complete ignorance of the dangers which I risked.
 1942 *Hartford* (Connecticut) *Courant* 2 Apr. 10/1 To be honest, I will admit that I am headstrong and do not like to be bossed.
 1999 *Evening Chron.* (Newcastle) (Nexis) 14 May 17 To be perfectly honest neither of those semi-finals was too hard.
 2011 A. FITZPATRICK *Strictly Legal* 124 I never asked for any details to be honest.

P3. Honest Injun: see **INJUN** *n.* and *adj.* Phrases.

P4. colloq. (orig. *U.S.*). **honest to God** (also **honest to goodness**, etc.).

a. Used, frequently parenthetically, to emphasize the truthfulness or sincerity of a statement: genuinely, really. Cf. **HONESTLY** *adv.* 4a.

- 1892 *Christian Union* (N.Y.) 21 May 990/1 'Honest to the Lord!' burst out Mary Ann, 'this do beat all!'
 1895 *Scribner's Mag.* Feb. 197/2 There ain't no call for you to believe what I say, but honest to God, this is only the second job o' this kind I ever was in.
 1914 'B. M. BOWER' *Flying U Ranch* 192 Honest to grandma, a little gore would look better to me now than a Dutch picnic.
 1916 J. JOYCE *Portrait of Artist* v. 212 Oh, honest to God, if the crook of it caught him that time he was done for.
 1929 W. H. THOMSON *That Terrier 'Brick'* xiii. 69 Honest-to-goodness, I didn't know that I was doing anything wrong.
 1953 S. KAUFFMANN *Philanderer* v. 80 We honest to God really dislike each other.
 1992 I. PATTISON *More Rab C. Nesbitt Scripts* 134 Honest to Christ, I've got my name doon for a double hip replacement, know what I'm saying?
 2001 *Mod. Maturity* Nov. 87/1 Sometimes I look out there and, honest to Pete, I see those planes coming in.

2006 G. MALKANI *Londonstani* ii. 18 You could tell if the people at home were friendly if the car parked in the driveway was a car with a friendly face. Honest to God, I in't jokin.

b. In *attrib.* use (usually hyphenated): genuine; sincere; unaffected, down-to-earth.

- 1905 *Lock Haven* (Pa.) *Express* 23 Aug. (*adv.*) Rose cream. An 'honest-to-goodness', really meritorious preparation which when applied to the face relieves the smarting of sunburn.
- 1913 *Fort Wayne* (Indiana) *Sentinel* 24 Apr. 2/5 He is a regular honest-to-God man.
- 1937 J. B. PRIESTLEY *Two Time Plays* p. xi It was not until I substituted for him an honest-to-goodness exiled German professor that the play began to look right.
- 1969 P. STURSBURG *Those were Days* xx. 69 There was nothing wrong with good honest-to-gosh partisanship...you knew where a paper stood then.
- 1985 R. SILVERBERG *Tom O'Bedlam* (1986) iii. 64 A madhouse? Really? An honest-to-Christ nuthatch?
- 2012 M. R. THOMPSON *I've had it up to here with Teenagers* 119 When a mom or sister gets an honest-to-God compliment from a son or brother in the household, it's the real deal.

SPECIAL USES

S1. Forming (chiefly parasynthetic) adjectives and related nouns, as ***honest-hearted***, ***honest-looking***, ***honest-minded***, ***honest-natured***, etc.

- 1565 L. EVANS *Brieue Admon.* sig. Aiii^v To move and bring anye honest harted man, to abhorre and myslyke all your licencious, lewde, and ouerstretched learning.
- 1583 G. PECKHAM *True Rep. Newfoundlandes* v. sig. E.iv^v Worshipful, honest minded, & wel disposed Marchants.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Timon of Athens* (1623) v. i. 84 My honest Natur'd friends.
- a1629 E. SANDYS *Europæ Specvlvm* (1632) 206 An honest-hearted [*earlier* honest heart] desire, but no probable dessein.
- 1707 S. CENTLIVRE *Platonick Lady* v. 63 Oh unparrallel'd Confidence, how cam'st thou by that honest looking form, hast thou not a Cloven Foot?
- a1796 R. BURNS *Poems & Songs* (1968) I. 28 A cheerful honest-hearted clown.
- 1830 *Imperial Mag.* Nov. 1071/1 Emulsion of almonds, by means of which..water may be changed into fair and honest-seeming milk.
- 1856 *Peterson's Mag.* Mar. 229/2 Rose, with her honest-eyed farmer, settled down in the dear old homestead.
- 1895 J. SMITH *Perm. Message Exod.* xix. 304 Jethro brings in his honest-heartedness.
- 1912 *Outlook* 19 Oct. 367/1 The heroine..is..a warm-hearted, honest-minded, and thoroughly independent woman.
- 1928 *Rotarian* Jan. 7/1 Honest-acting good fellowship.
- 1962 L. SWORTZELL *Tom Taylor's Our Amer. Cousin* ii. 73 Rough-spun, honest-hearted Asa Trenchard.
- 1985 B. SMALL *This Heart of Mine* iii. 94 They had no intention of replacing an honest-born English queen with a Spanish infanta.
- 2010 D. WEST *Project Sponsorship* ii. vi. 66 You decide that I'm an honest-looking chap, not half as seedy as you first thought.

†**S2.** *poet.* In combination with other adjectives, with the sense 'honest and —'. *Obs.*

- a1592 R. GREENE *Sc. Hist. James IV* (1598) ii. sig. D^v Yet would I (might I chuse) be honest poore.
- 1600 SHAKESPEARE *Merchant of Venice* iii. iv. 46 As I have euer found thee honest true.

S3.

honest broker *n.* a person or nation acting as a diplomatic mediator between opposing nations, states, etc.; also in extended use.

Originally with reference to or as an epithet of Bismarck. [After German *ehrlicher Makler*, originally translated as 'honourable broker' (see quot. 1878), used in a speech by Otto von Bismarck to the Reichstag on 19th Feb. 1878, with reference to the role of Germany as mediator between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in a proposed conference to bring about a peaceful end to the Russo-Turkish War (1877–8).]

- [1878 tr. O. von Bismarck in *Standard* 20 Feb. 5/6 To my mind, it is rather the mediation of an honourable broker, who really wishes to carry on business.]
- 1878 *Times* 27 Mar. 11/1 Prince Bismarck does not seem particularly disposed to act the 'honest broker' in a business which he is afraid will either bring on a split or else terminate in a hollow compromise.
- 1938 W. N. MEDLICOTT *Congr. of Berlin & After* 135 The publication of the terms of the Austro-German agreement abrogating Article V of the treaty of Prague suggested that the honest broker had taken a bribe or reward from Austria.
- 1970 *Times* 31 Mar. (Australian Suppl.) p. ii/3 Australia acted the comparatively successful honest broker between the United States and the kingdom of Cambodia.
- 1992 *New Statesman & Society* 4 Dec. 7/2 John Denham..was brought in to act as honest broker, writing an appendix to the pamphlet that takes note of the 'lively debate' within the Tribune Group.
- 2004 *Times Lit. Suppl.* 24 Sept. 8/4 In her own enlightened self-interest, Germany should play the role of honest broker between Paris and London.

Honest John *n.* (a) *colloq.* (also with lower-case initial in the first element) a truthful, trustworthy, or sincere man; (b) a type of surface-to-surface ballistic missile designed to carry a nuclear warhead (now *hist.*).

- 1855 *Henry's Birthday* 99 'An honest John!' said they. 'Give us more. They are so good we want two a-piece.'
- 1902 E. R. EASTMAN *Poems* i. ix. 19 His cook, an honest John of Schwabian type, Refused to sell stale bread and stringy meat.
- 1952 *Corpus Christi (Texas) Times* 4 Jan. 4/3 Some day the missile men..may send..an 'Honest John' or one of the other missiles being developed,..with a loaded warhead directed at enemy bombers.
- 1994 P. SLEEM *Second Time Around* xx. 290 Galleria didn't think you'd take the money. He thought you were too much of an Honest John.
- 2010 T. G. WICKS *Huntsville Air & Space* 9 Earlier in the year [sc. 1960], a Hawk missile had shot down an Honest John.

