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dread  (drĕd)

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v. **dread·ed, dread·ing, dreads**

v.tr.

1. To be in terror of; fear intensely: *"What I most dreaded as a child was the close danger of the atomic bomb" (James Carroll).*

2. To anticipate with alarm, distaste, or reluctance: *We dreaded the long drive home.*

3. *Archaic* To hold in awe or reverence.

v.intr.

To be very afraid.

n.

1.

a. Profound fear; terror: *"the dread of a fire that would end not just my life but everyone else's" (Jan Clausen).*

b. Fearful or anxious anticipation: *the dread of saying something foolish on stage.* See Synonyms at [fear](#).

c. An instance of fear or fearful anticipation: *His dreads about school finally subsided.*

d. A source of fear, awe, or reverence: *The author's greatest dread is that the book will go unnoticed.*

2.

a. A dreadlock: *She wears her hair in dreads.*

b. A person who wears dreadlocks.

3. *Archaic* Awe; reverence.

adj.

1. Causing terror or fear: *a dread disease.* See Usage Note below.

2. Inspiring awe: *the dread presence of the headmaster.*

[Middle English *dreden*, short for *adreden*, from Old English *adrēdan*, from *ondrēdan*, to advise against, fear : *ond-*, *and-*, against; see [UN-](#)² + *rēdan*, to advise; see **ar-** in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.]

Usage Note: The adjective *dread* meaning "causing terror or fear" is often supplanted by the participle adjective *dreaded*. In our 2015 survey, 88 percent of the Usage Panel found the use of *dreaded* acceptable in the sentence *After communicating with the enemy, Corporal Adams was labeled with the dreaded epithet "traitor."* By contrast, only 69 percent of the Panel found the use of *dread* in the same sentence acceptable, while roughly one-third found its use unacceptable. It seems that *dreaded* is not merely gaining ground as an alternative to *dread* but actually replacing it as the adjective of choice to mean "causing fear."

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

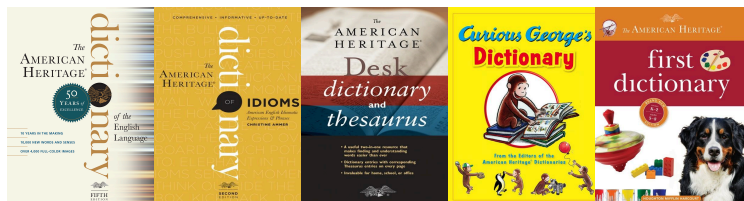
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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