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po·tas·si·um  (pə-tăs ē-əm)

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n. **Symbol** **K**

A soft, silver-white, extremely reactive element that is an alkali metal, is essential to plant and animal cell functions, and occurs in nature only in compounds. It can be obtained by electrolysis of its hydroxide and is found in, or converted to, a wide variety of salts used especially in fertilizers and soaps. Atomic number 19; atomic weight 39.098; melting point 63.5°C; boiling point 759°C; specific gravity 0.86; valence 1. See [Periodic Table](#).

[From earlier *potass*, *potash* (from which it was first obtained), from French *potasse*, from Dutch *potas* : *pot*, *pot* (from Middle Dutch; akin to Old English *pott*) + *as*, *ash* (from Middle Dutch *asche*; see **as-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#)).]

po-tas sic *adj.*

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

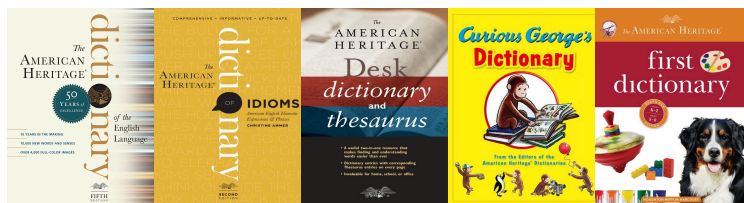
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

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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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